

**THE CHALLENGES OF CHILD ADOPTION: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS
DISCOURSE ON THE EBONYI CHRISTIAN COUPLES' EXPERIENCE**

BY

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JUNE, 2019.

CERTIFICATION

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APPROVAL

We ratify that this dissertation carried out under our supervision, has been examined and found to have met the regulations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. We therefore approve the work for the award of Ph.D degree in Religion and Human Relations.

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DEDICATION

The work is dedicated to The Almighty God, my wife, Mrs. Nkiru Chukwuma and children, Chidinma and Chiamaka.

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I take responsibility for any shortcomings that may be detected in this work.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NAPTIP-	National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
UNICEF-	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
ART-	Alternative Reproductive Technology
ART-	Assisted Reproductive Technology
FETHA -	Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki
ACC-	African Children's Charter
NPC-	National Population Commission
NSCDC-	Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp
CBC-	Century Before Christ
A.D-	Anno Domini-(After Christ)
I.C.P.C-	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
D.N.A-	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
EFAC-	Evangelical Fellowship of Anglican Communion
C.C.C-	Catechism of the Catholic Church
U.N-	United Nations
S.S.S.	State Security Services
N.E -	North East
WHO-	World Health Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The work dealt with the challenges experienced by Christians who hail from Ebonyi State, in search of a child or a particular gender, when the option of adopting a child is considered. It was necessitated by the high rate of infertility and its associated problems noticed among married couples, which adoption have not mitigated but potentially can worsen, viewed from the traditional Igbo worldview. Even as Christians, Ebonyi people still hold on to their traditional values and therefore are in dilemma of whether to adopt a child or not. The work was aimed at identifying those socio-religious factors that discourage persons from the area from adopting and ills associated with various means of adoption, which hamper child adoption. The study will incite cultural reorientation aimed at changing the negative perception about the adoption triad, thereby encouraging child adoption. This will save the society the vengeful attack of the “unwanted child” on the society if they are not adopted and also satiate the need of the infertile Ebonyi Christians. The work covered mostly childless male and female Christian couples who hail from Ebonyi State and some with their own biological children who may wish to adopt children. The family System theory propounded by Urie Broffennbrenner which states that actions and human development are determined by various bio-ecological systems was used to analyse the work. Also Humphery J. Fishers tripartite conversion theory analysed the historical trajectory of conversion that made the Ebonyi Christian to retain the two opposed worldviews of Christianity and Igbo traditional religion. The work is of qualitative design, which is descriptive. The Study was a phenomenological study. Data was gathered through face to face oral interviews and personal observation. Research questions of this work were raised in the questionnaire at the appendix. Also secondary source of data collection, in form of books, journals, published and unpublished texts like dissertations were used. It was discovered that religion and culture were significant and capable of influencing a couple’s decision to adopt. Also, secret adoption through the baby factory was seen to be mostly patronized with the ills inherent. The work therefore recommended the establishment of an existing practice in other parts of the world, known as “baby hatch or baby box” to enhance agency or legal adoption practice, while preachers engage traditionalisation in conveying their message to accommodate African cultural values, since they are indispensable in the Ebonyi Christians’ thought pattern and decision making process. By this practice, the adoptee will be quickly and safely adopted into homes where they will be catered for. The teenager who is pregnant with “unwanted pregnancy” will be saved the stigma that goes with her condition and adoptive parents will be able to adopt children within the ambit of the law. Other beneficiaries from the work will include the government who by this arrangement can easily gather data on child adoption and ensure that proper documentation like issuance of adoption order is maintained.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In Ebonyi State, there have been growing awareness of child adoption and sincere desire to adopt children by infertile couples and couples who desire to have a specific sex of a child. However, it has been observed that sometimes, the tedious, complex, very long and heavy financially demanding process of adoption, discourage some persons from adopting. The cumbersome process of adopting, which vary in some South East States is not explicitly known by many childless couples. The relevant government agencies responsible for child adoption in the various States do not have uniform modality for adoption that is widely known.

It has been observed that ignorance of the operations of government agency in charge of child adoption also compel infertile couples to seek help “behind the door” to obtain a child at baby factories (Alichie, 2015). The ease with which solutions are realised from the baby factories therefore makes it an attractive means of adopting children without laid down beaureaucratic procedures.

Couples, who have lived for some years, fully exercising their sexuality without result of pregnancy and a birth-child, are referred to as infertile couples. Infertility is a state that no married couple would desire or wish to experience as that negates one of the most important aims of marriage and sex. Consequently it drains the joy, peace and harmony in marriage. Everything possible, therefore, must be done to arrest this ugly situation. This stirs up anxiety in them, which does not tolerate patience, especially where the age of the woman is deemed to have advanced. Such couples, sometimes, go through “baby factories” and overnight, become parents, reducing child bearing to a mere transaction. This leaves the impression that babies are sold and bought in Nigeria as one buys chocolate from a confectioner’s store. 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” (p.44). Huntley in Alichie (2015) described it as “forced impregnations, sales of babies and illegal adoption” (p.44). The electronic and print media are littered with bits of news, on the activities of baby factories in Ebonyi State in particular and the South East in general. These activities leave much to be desired morally.

Scholars and researchers on the subject of child adoption seem to unanimously agree that stigmatization is a major factor militating against adoption in Ebonyi State and beyond. Stigmatization due to infertility is an experience people would not want to expose themselves to. Agbo (2014) reported an attempted suicide by a barren woman because “it is a general belief that a woman who did not have a child for her husband is a failed woman” (p.87). An adopted child in Nwoga’s (2013) and Agbo’s (2014), opinion is a stigma. They compared an adopted child with an “*Osu*”; a cult slave, an outcast, a sacred and holy being, a living sacrifice and an untouchable, according to Dike’s (2009) description. To Onwubuariri (2016), “*Osu*” practice in most cases is seen as a curse” (p.64) which is dreaded and discriminated against. To them, a child adopted into an Igbo community is sometimes treated as an outcast for fear that the child’s biological background, if traceable to an “*Osu*”, is capable of polluting the entire family.

Osu caste is a social stratification system among the Igbo, where a person is sacrificed to the gods in Igbo community to assist the high priest of the traditional religion to serve the deities or gods in the shrine. Akin to Mass Servants in the Roman Catholic Church they serve in the shrine and they are owned by the gods and the community at large (Onwubuariri, 2016). Various names are used to refer to “*Osu*” in various Igbo societies. For instance, Nzam people in Omambala call them *Abu Edo*, the Nsukka people refer to them as *Oruma*.

They are called *Nwani* or *Ohualusi* in Awgu area, and *Osu*, *Ume*, *Ohu*, *Oru*., *Omoni* (*Okpu Aja*), all have the same connotation in Igboland (Dike, 2009). The role of an *Osu* in the religious and social life of the Igbo is evident in their prayer of consecration. He is made to be the absorber of the iniquities, weakness and problems of the people. In fact, he is made to take on himself, the death of the free born (Onwubuariri, 2016). *Osu* depicts a person who is ostracized from the routine social life of the Igbo, an impure person, a carrier of the iniquity of the people, a bastard that must be isolated from his mates and others to avoid attracting various forms of ills. The Igbo believe that an *Osu* interacting with a free born is capable of polluting the latter's heritage, hence the stigma associated with any situation like *Osu*.

The Ebonyi people as Igbo are highly religious. They do everything religiously. Apparently, sociological order of the Igbo people's life sustaining the *Osu* caste or the perception of an adopted child as *Osu*, is therefore supported by the tendency to give religious meaning to the ontological place of the adopted child in the society, without jeopardizing nor trivializing the importance of consanguineous relationship.

The stigmatisation attached to undesirable conception by teenagers also sustain the thriving of baby factories. Teenage pregnancy is the case of a teenager or an adolescent, usually within ages of thirteen to nineteen years, who becomes pregnant, mostly out of wedlock (Alabi & Oni, 2017). In such cases, such persons are deemed not prepared physically, mentally, economically and socially to undertake the role of parenthood. Physically, it predisposes teenagers to unsavory health conditions like high blood pressure, pre-eclampsia, malnutrition, vesico vaginal fistula, recto vaginal fistula and sometimes, death. Economically, it is responsible for numerous cases of school dropout, starvation and loss of an organized future. Socially, it is a condition that families frown at and teenagers suffer emotional rejection as a result of these conditions (Alabi & Oni, 2017).

Atuyambe *et al* (2005) identified stigmatization as a psycho-social problem experienced in teenage pregnancy. To them, becoming pregnant as an adolescent is a stigmatizing experience and it brings shame to the family and in some cases, girls decide to hide from the view of family and familiar associates. A teenager who gives birth to a child outside of wedlock is deemed to have disgraced herself and her family. She is therefore stigmatized by her family, friends and the society at large. She is made an object of scorn and ridicule. To save herself and her family the shame, ridicule, and stigma accruable from her action, she might engage in abortion or better still, where she is afraid of jeopardizing her life, she might go into the hands of baby factory operators who will take care of her, and in turn, she forfeits the baby she did not want after all, to be given out in adoption by her care givers. 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. This is the adoption triad.

Worse still for the adopted child, where the adopting parents eventually produce a biological child of their own, threat of stigmatization and discrimination become inevitable because, according to Nwaoga (2013), the Igbo family patrilineal system maintains that entitlement to resources of inheritance flows from the father-figure which is hereditary. Sometimes, this is a problem for the child as he or she will be discriminated against, in relation to placement, entitlement and role in the family. In some Ebonyi communities, the bastard syndrome hold sway here as the “*Osu*” may be preferred because his father is known, but an adopted child is rejected because his father is not known, hence a bastard. Igbo dread being referred to as bastard.

Ebonyi people are predominantly Christians. As Igbo Christians, childless couples are encouraged to trust and wait on God for their own biological children. Adoption therefore amounts to disbelief and lack of faith in God’s ability to bless them with their own child.

They are encouraged by the preachers to wait on God's blessings like Abraham did, to be blessed of their own children. 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 forty five years and fifty years for couples who already have some children and between thirty to forty years for women wishing to adopt new born babies (Agbo 2014, Chukwu 2012). This amounts to a conflict between faith and child adoption. With the high rate of late marriages witnessed in the society in recent times, the bulk of these infertile couples are already over aged and hence not qualified to adopt.

Various governments of the world have continually waged war against illegal trafficking in persons. In Nigeria, the activities of the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) have implicated some private adoption agencies in the crime of trafficking in persons. International adoption which entails the adoption of a child across national borders, have in some cases, turned out to be actually trafficking in persons, clothed with the garb of adoption. Such adoptions have often emanated from illegal adoption homes known as baby factories. Fear of being implicated with charges of human trafficking; therefore discourage genuine Christian Igbo adopters from adopting.

The implications of the activities of human traffickers who originate their "business" from the baby factories, are far reaching for the actors in the chain of the trade. According to Salihu *et al* (2016), the people who engage in this criminal act are surported by some prominent figures within and outside the government in our society. Other actors are the recruiters, sellers, transporters and receiving agents. Others include immigration officers who perfect paper works, brothel owners and their pimps, and health practitioners who provide cover and specialized services to actors in the crime, as identified by (UNICEF, 2006). Landlords of houses where the babies are produced, teenage girls who produce the babies and men who impregnate them are also a part of the chain.

The first set of actors, corrupt government agents and respected persons in the society, perhaps because of their financial status, depict the level of moral decay in the Nigerian society. Ozigbo (1999) traced this decay to the attending results of the evangelization of Ebonyi State, which to him are ‘individualism, the capitalist ethic and selfishness” (p.117). Doubtless, this trio lies at the base of the actions of these persons who betray and subvert government trust and goals for their own benefit. Checking child trafficking, baby factory operations, child sales for ritual purposes, illegal adoption, teenage prostitution and other ancillary social crimes, therefore becomes a herculean task that demands a reawakening of the valued traditional ethos of the Igbo encapsulated in *Omenani* meaning tradition which alien religions have greatly eroded. This will greatly check the activities of bourgeois and power brokers in these crimes as their role leaves the law enforcement agents incapacitated.

Teenagers involved in this trade are often lured into the trade by their high sexual drive, illiteracy and poverty. These crimes provide the misguided youth, with ample opportunity for indulgence, thereby frustrating the future of the youths who are said to be the future of the family. After all, these actors will not allow their children to engage in such acts but will want to use other people’s children to make wealth. The philosophy of *Nkemdirim* – may mine be preserved, in this instance while other’s own be destroyed is bad. This leads to the frustration of the hopes and aspirations of parenthood and family life.

For the Ebonyi Christian couple who is in need of adopting a child intra State, inter State or across national borders, being implicated with any of the aforementioned crimes while trying to legitimately adopt a child, reduces the suspect to a common criminal when projected in the public media. Even after investigations, trial and perhaps release, the reproach and stigma sticks as the suspect is not taken back to the press for exoneration. Sometimes the professional traffickers and criminals cover their tracks perfectly leaving the genuine Ebonyi Christian adopter to suffer the brunt of their crimes when caught with the

child by law enforcement agents. No adopter will wish to go through this ordeal, thereby discouraging child adoption.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The factors that inform the challenges experienced by Ebonyi Christians, when the need arises for adopting a child form the main problem thrust of this section. 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 globalisation, 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 land inheritance among the Ebonyi people even as Christians. However, some, not all communities in Ebonyi State deny persons of land inheritance. This denial does not apply to inheritance transferred by an adopter but rather sharing of communal land.

Nonetheless, the infertile Ebonyi Christian desires a successor who he may have to adopt ultimately; an adoptee who is not linked with him by blood. Maltreatment and denial of a late husband's inheritance against widows is a common phenomenon that may be remedied through child adoption. This is most prominent in patrilineal societies, typical of Igboland. Although a few societies like Ohafia in Abia state are matrilineal, yet transfer of inheritance still demands consanguineous relationship. The adopted child is not only a necessity but forms an object of stigmatization and denial, frustrating the fortunes and aspirations of the maltreated widow.

The bastard syndrome is a factor militating against the choice to adopt by Igbo Christians. A bastard is someone who does not know his or her roots, parents or ancestors. Ebonyi people are autochthonous and therefore attach great importance to their parternity as a source of identity, nativity and inheritance. They therefore dread being refered to as a bastard

(Ekwunife, 2016). *Osu*, a cult slave dedicated to deities or gods; is dreaded and intimacy with such is avoided in Igboland. In the very 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” (p.88). 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 later is spiritually clean. Although the adopted suffers social stigma, he freely relates with members of the society. Yet Okodo cautioned that where the background of an adopted child is traced to an *Osu*, the adopting parents and their family are contaminated as well. Therefore, if the secrecy that is required in adoption which conceals the biological root of the adopted child is maintained from the child, the society and even the adopting parents as practised in the agency adoption, the *Osu* issue may not arise at all.

Even as Christians, Ebonyi people, at least by their value of traditional religious convictions, dread the loss of their name or family that can only be carried on by a blood related son. A deeper understanding of the essence of blood relationship for the continuity of the family stems from the belief in the 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 circle means an end of the family, which only consanguineous procreation supports. Adoption therefore does not fit into the cyclic conception of existence or life. At the same time, no Igbo want to see his ‘*Ama*’ closed or end. The *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.

Patronage of orphanages and particularly illegal adoption homes otherwise termed Baby Factories, amount to encouraging the business. Poverty and quest for financial gain are major factors motivating young girls to indulge in producing babies for sale in these factories

(Omeire, 2016). The huge profits made by operators of such homes also serve as strong incentives. To Madu (2013), “it becomes a very nasty moral question when the teenage girls consciously engage in this act for the sake of business” (p. 29). This is more so obvious as it serves as a breeding ground for commercial sex workers also referred to as harlots which Igbo Christian should not by any means support or patronize, yet he needs a child for adoption when he is infertile. Mind bugging questions that are begging for answers from the foregoing are:

1. Why should stigmatization and discrimination due to a child’s birth circumstance be entertained, when the child is innocent of it. No child would have opted to be born under any questionable circumstance where he has the power to decide on it.
2. Why must the stigma of “out of wedlock” pregnancy compel a teenage mother to abandon her baby in baby factory after she has gone through the pains of bearing the child? This underscores the extent that stigmatization and the feeling of shame could push an individual to.
3. Why should traditional religious values like the “*Osu*” system 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 means anything for Christians, the *osu* caste issue will not be entertained much as it is not voiced out or people are not openly called *Osu*.
4. At what age should a childless Christian couple loose faith and adopt a child? Patience while expecting from God is regarded as a virtue but menopause in a woman implies termination of the process of reproduction. Therefore indefinite waiting in exercise of faith threatens a woman’s legal qualification or pre-condition for adoption. Yet, even at obvious old age, faith still promises to deliver like in Sarah’s case, when she had Isaac.
5. Should Christians adopt from baby factories if it amounts to encouraging promiscuity, bearing in mind the rigors involved in agency or legal adoption? If the maxim that

patronizing a criminal makes one a criminal or at best, an accomplice to the crime, adopting from an illegal adoption home also known as ‘baby factory’ portend participating in the crimes found in such a place. This is a moral issue that does not project the Christian in good light. This work is an attempt to answer these knotty moral questions and dilemmas.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at identifying the socio-religious factors that compel or pressurise childless Ebonyi Christian couples to resort to adoption. In pursuing this central aim, these objectives of this study therefore are as follows;

1. To identify those factors that discourages Igbo Christians from adopting. It has been noticed from scholars that psychological, administrative or legal, sociological and religious factors play a part in the decision to adopt. This study aims at succinctly identifying them
2. To assess the extent of the influence of Igbo traditional culture and religious values on the choice and decision of the Ebonyi Christians to adopt.
3. To identify, the nexus of the meeting of African Traditional Religion and Christianity over the subject of Child adoption.
4. To investigate the social nuisance constituted by some adoption practices, especially through the illegal means
5. To proffer suggestions on how to curb these excesses exhibited by the Baby factories as operated in recent times in South East in general and Ebonyi State in particular.
6. To analyze some laws on adoption with a view of making them more pragmatic, practical and less rigorous, thereby enhancing child adoption for Igbo Christians.
7. To identify modalities for discreetly “picking” unwanted babies from teenagers for adoption, within the frame of government agencies devoid of the activities of “baby factory” operators.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in very many respects. First, clarification of the facts surrounding adoption will instill confidence in childless Christian couples which will lead them to make sound and informed decision in their choice either for or against the adoption and fostering of a child..

Second, the study will instigate cultural reorientation aimed at changing the negative perception of Ebonyi Christians and indeed Nigerians about adopted children and teenage mothers who dump babies. This will in turn curb incidence of stigmatization that does not favor adoption.

Third, the study will instill some moral sanity in lewd teenagers, who are often exploited for the benefit of baby factory operators, thereby evading the negative consequences of immoral life such as infertility in later years of life, lack or delay in marriage, distorted educational life, and untimely death and so on. This in turn will save the society the danger posed by an increased presence of unadopted children in orphanages who turn to social miscreants such as armed robbers, prostitutes, assassins, cultists, kidnappers and so on. An unadopted child who consequently is not trained or educated in a gainful skill or vocation is capable of unleashing vengeful attack on the society that have made life difficult for him or her through crime.

Fourth, the study will benefit other researchers on the subject of adoption who may have to go back to research into the possibility and moral justification of government's involvement in mass producing babies for adoption through Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) like invitro-fertilisation, cloning and so on, since the cost is high for individuals.

Fifth, this study will benefit law makers, policy makers and indeed the government who will be able to see the need to innovate peculiar and pragmatic ways of monitoring closely the activities of adoption homes within the ambient of government to ensure proper

but discreet or confidential documentation of adoption, monitoring of adopted children and where necessary, amending the laws, policies and practices to reflect the cultural, economic and social realities of the society.

Finally, the work will offer the Church especially the Pentecostals, the grounds on which they can encourage couples who are in need of support to go ahead and adopt without losing faith of having their own biological children. This will provide homes, love and care to the vulnerable and defenseless children as well as joy, peace and fulfillment to childless couples.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study critically assessed the Igbo Christian couple's reaction to childlessness often caused by infertility, irrespective of the gender of the person desiring children, drawing inferences from the experience of infertile couples from the Ebonyi State. The study covered the thirteen local government areas of the State, namely, Abakaliki, Izzi, Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ebonyi, Ezza South, Ezza North, Ikwo, Ivo, Ohaozara, Ohaukwu and Onicha.

1.6. Methodology

The design of the work is qualitative and Nze (2009) terms it interpretivism. Denscombe argued that it is successfully used in social research. It is also popular in health and behavioural sciences (Creswell, 2013). This design used explored the social world by describing the phenomena of Child adoption with the view of understanding how the society functions and methods by which dissatisfactions accruing from the practice or acceptance of Child adoption can be changed for good. The design described relations between various systems in the society and examined the causes and effect of such relationships. The work therefore was a descriptive cross sectional study of both male and female Christian married persons. The method used in the study was phenomenology. According to Ritzer (2008), this method dealt with every day life in which people create social reality and are constrained by the existing social and cultural structures created by their predecessors. Child Adoption as a

creation of the modern culture is indeed constrained by the Ebonyi traditional solution to Childlessness that is dialectically opposed to Christian solution that prescribe holy living, prayer, fasting and unwavering faith in God. Field study was carried out in this work. According to Ejizu (1986), phenomenology is multidimensional and this was applied in this work by the use of Ethnomethodology and Cultural history as cognate approaches. To Heritage (1984), ethnomethodology studies how members of a society make sense of, ratify, find their way in and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves. Despite that the society makes sense of Child adoption as a means of solving Childlessness, it behoves of the individual as a member of the society to find a way of solving his life crises issue either from the limits of his new found faith of Christianity, his traditional religious purview of polygyny, from Child Adoption or from alternate forms of Assisted Reproductive Technology. This is often determined and acted on by the individual's peculiar circumstances which include his religious leaning, finances, educational background, work place, family structure and perception of the society about the phenomena. However phenomenology and ethnomethodology seem to be same because they study by describing phenomena as it presents itself to consciousness without recourse to existing theory, deduction or assumptions from other disciplines. The religio-cultural history of the Ebonyi Christian couple that informed his retention of two dialectically opposed Worldviews was investigated.

This method was preferred because phenomenology allows data to speak for itself without being forced into any preconceived scheme. Data from persons experiencing infertility was collated and grouped according to their demographic categories. Their responses to issues surrounding their willingness to Adopt Children, was also grouped, considering their disposition to the questions raised. Further, it allowed us to see how various ecological systems hung together and permeated the various levels of the people's social life. Finally, It showed how Ebonyi traditional religious Worldview diffused into all the facets of

the peoples life, thereby posing as a challenge in Ebonyi childless Christian couple's willingness to either adopt a child, strictly apply the Christian options of monogamy or realize a biological child through application of faith.

Data was collected, using the primary method of data collection. This method of data collection was executed through interviews and observation. Structured interview was conducted in this work, to find out those factors that inform the challenges that are experienced by Ebonyi Christians in Child Adoption. Complimentary unstructured questions were posed to find out the respondents personal or peculiar opinion on relevant issues as a follow up question. Direct observation which Denscombe (2010) described as the researchers first hand source of information that is raw as it occurred, was used in this work as the researcher lives among Christians of Ebonyi State. This afforded him the opportunity of seeing events as they unfolded. The interview method however had its own weakness because direct contact with respondents was suspected to have affected the objectivity of information that the respondents divulged, especially where they were involved. The problem of child adoption is a sensitive topic which a couple that is suffering infertility may not wish to discuss because it may seem like a mockery of their state. Consequently, information that they will be divulging may be misleading, to cover up their complexes compared to what they may wish to disclose, if they had the liberty of privacy that written questionnaire provides. It was observed that stigmatization that goes with infertility is a problem which only very few persons could freely discuss (Agbo, 2014). The researcher filled information gathered from the respondents in a field note, in order of the questions posed. Persons literate in English language responded to the questions themselves while respondents who spoke in their traditional or local dialects that the researcher was not conversant with, communicated through an interpreter who spoke in the popular or central Igbo dialect or English. Some of the respondents were found at the fertility treatment clinic of the Federal Teaching Hospital,

Abakaliki and Mile Four Hospital, both located in Abakaliki. In Ebonyi State, the people have various sub-cultures. Cultural variations within these various sub - cultures explicates the varieties of responses that may arise among people with similar demographic conditions.

Secondary source of data collection was also used. This refers to the use of books, journals, articles, relevant memos, newspapers, magazines, internet extractions, gazettes, project reports of previous works on the subject under study. This was most relevant in the qualitative analysis of the work.

The method used in this work for analysis was discourse analysis, which Denscombe (2010) described as a deconstruction of data with the intention of using texts or visual images to create or sustain aspects of social life. Data gathered and observations made by the researcher were fitted into schemes that were created as new findings by the work or sustained existing schemes in social life. Because discourse analysis makes use of existing knowledge about the society, it employed the data gathered to fill the gaps and say the unspoken, thereby creating a new structure of knowledge. Child adoption and the experience of challenges among Ebonyi Christians as an existing scheme of social event served as the basis for analysis that after filling up the existing gaps will produce a new knowledge. Igbo culture is also another existing scheme to work with.

Cultural analytical approach was used to ascertain the extent of cultural influence on the decision to adopt. The data gathered in the work were analysed with the theories presented against the factors that compel infertile couples to adopt. The extent of conversion that has taken place among childless Christians couples in Ebonyi State that still permit the influence of traditional religious values, also received analytical attention. The historical analytical approach was also found to be most helpful in discussing the trajectory of conversion. It also carried with it the depth of conversion that is informed by motives for yielding to the proselytisation advances of the missionaries, on arrival of Christianity to Igboland and

subsequent conversions of the Igbo. Data gathered as factors influencing child adoption positively or negatively, were presented and analysed against their respondent's level of education and socio-demographic qualities.

1.7.0. Definition of Terms

Words have been known to possess' connotative and literal meaning. Circumstances of usage could alter the meaning of words. Words are symbolic as they are only used to associate or represent other things. Ejizu (1985) referred to this phenomenon as multivocality. He used this term while discussing attributes of symbols, where a word could have multiple fans of reference. For the purpose of clarity, some keywords used in this research are defined to enhance the appreciation of the contexts in which these words were used. Keywords to be defined are child, Experience, Adoption, Igbo, Couple, infertile.

1.7.1. Child

. Encarta (2001) defines a child as a daughter or son who is still a minor or below age of responsibility and accountability, descent from a tribe, race or people. An offspring, born or considered a product of culture or place.

1.7.2 Adoption

Adoption according to online Etymology dictionary is, a legal proceeding that creates a parent-child relation between persons not related by blood. The adopted child is entitled to all privileges belonging to a natural child of the adoptive parents including the right to inherit. It is the act of accepting with approval; favorable reception.

1.7.3. Infertile

It is inability to grow crops abundantly or produce an offspring. It is a woman's inability to carry pregnancy and carry same to delivery, after engaging in sex for a period of

one year. It also means inability to produce more desired children after previous conception and child birth.

1.7.4. Couple

Cambridge (2017) defines couple as two or a few people who are in some way connected. It is two people who are married or in a romantic relationship. It is also used to refer to two persons who engage in sex. In recent times, two persons of same sex are referred to as couple when they choose to be married and subsequently engage in sexual intercourse.

1.7.5 Experience

Experience is knowledge or mastery of an event or subject gained through involvement or exposure to it. It is regarded as “a posteriori” knowledge that is based on personal involvement in a procedural manner, as opposed to propositional knowledge which depends on book learning.

1.7.6 Igbo

The Igbo refer to indigenes of the South Eastern States of Nigeria. The South Eastern States of Nigeria are Abia, Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi (Nwaoga, 2015). The word Igbo refer to the language and also refer to the people or group. Recently, Igbo or Ibo is used interchangeably to identify the Igbo speaking people (Arinze, 1970). Ilogu (1974) accommodated parts of Ikwere, Etche of Rivers State and parts of Delta State as Igbo. The word Igbo is used to identify the culture. It has various subcultures within it and dialectal differences. Ilogu (1974) argues that although some differences abound in ethical and religious practices among the Igbo people, it is just like in any other culture group. The common features binding all these groups are overwhelming and override the differences.

Though agnatic in nature, the effect of secularism and globalization have enhanced the migration of the Igbo not only located in South Eastern Nigeria but indeed to other parts of the world. The Igbo are industrious and agrarian. Arinze (1970) underscored this by stating that even today; those who trade in the big towns or do clerical work do not forget the farm. Their trade-social philosophy is communalism. The Igbo communalistic world stresses the common-good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity and social responsibility (Ndofirepi and Shumba, 2014). Tradition to the Igbo is called “*omenani*” (Ilogu, 1974, Arinze 1970) custom; ‘how it is done on the land’ or “*odinani*” that which is inherent on the land (Arinze, 1970). *Omenani* or *Odinani* is the means by which the social ethos is measured and conformity is enforced. Because it traverses every aspect of the people’s life, Ilogu (1974) submits that it is the means of summarizing the social philosophy and religious doctrine of the Ibo as it is derived from and sanctioned by the *Ala* goddess and the ancestors respectively.

Ejiofor (1981) and Mbiti (1969) attributed the denigration and erosion of cultural values suffered by the Africans in general and Igbo in particular to the effects of colonialism, slavery, western education and Christianization of the area. Most recent trends and development in the world such as globalization, secularism and other emerging global issues have further impacted negatively on the culture of the people where it can neither be called typical Igbo culture nor lack Igbo cultural traces. Ejiofor (1981) and Madu (2003) described this as a state of cultural disequilibrium due to the agony of choice being experienced by the Igbo between the values of his custom and worldview against the alien values and worldview that have besieged his world. The tenacity of this ‘agony’ is hinged on the pervading influence of his traditional religion on culture even after imbibing Christian religious values. Thus, during life crises situations, he resorts to his traditional religion, even as a Christian. This does not in any way diminish his patronage of the Christian God through consulting

prophets and prayer houses (Ifesieh, 1989, Madu, 2003). On this rest the matrix of dilemma he faces, as he decides whether to adopt a child or not, given his concerted traditional and Christian religious background.

1.7.7. Worldview

Sigmund Freud (1933) defined world view as an intellectual construction that provides unified answers or solution to all problems of human existence, interests and yearnings. Achebe as cited by Ekwunife (2016) calls it “the totality of each person’s assumptions, involving his beliefs, attitude, values and concepts, and serving to impose an order on his experiences and to provide an explanation for everything that happens” (p.63). Ifesieh (1989) sees it as a body of beliefs about the universe, which is shared and existentially demonstrated in their value scales like rituals, morals, rules, norms, ideas myths, theologies, social conduct and philosophy of life. Madu (1997) summed up these definitions, stating that “it is the complex of a people’s beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, structure, organization and interaction of beings in the universe with particular reference to man” (p.1). Worldview therefore is the assumption of a people about the beings that share their world with them, and the totality of their experiences, aimed at providing answers to the numerous existential questions that confront them.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is an overview of the relevant works previously done by the other scholars on the various aspects of the research. The review will focus on three major aspects namely, conceptual framework, theoretical framework and empirical studies. The challenging experience lies within the opposing posture of the world views held by the various perspectives which coalesce into solving the need of a child for a childless couple, in the form of adoption.

2. 1. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework relates to concepts in the work. Concepts deal with the ideas that exist in the mind or imagination. Denscombe (2010) defines concept as a basic idea that is generally abstract and universal rather than concrete and specific. It helps to explain phenomenon or basic ideas that encapsulate the way that categories relate to each other in a single notion. It explains how and why things happen the way they do and generate theories for doing so. Framework, according to Hornby (2011) is identification or categorization of processes or steps that constitute a complex task or mindset in order to render explicit, that which is understood but not stated or in other words implied. The following concepts in this work are discussed; Infertile, Couple, Adoption and Child.

2.1. 1. Infertile

Infertile simply means not being able to produce fruit or an offspring as an animal, plant or human. In humans, Infertility is the inability to become pregnant and carry it to full term or delivery. WHO (2013) defines it as the inability of a sexually active, non contracepting couple to achieve pregnancy in one year. It is also defined as inability to

become pregnant with a live birth within five years of exposed consistent sex without contraceptive, none lactating and maintaining a desire for a child.

Infertility is classified into primary and secondary infertility. Primary infertility refers to a woman's inability to carry pregnancy to term at least, once. Secondary infertility means inability to carry pregnancy to term or live birth, following a previous delivery (Cousieau & Domar, 2007). Couples who have had a child or children but wish to have more or a particular gender without success can be said to be experiencing it.

Infertility, whether of primary or secondary types are precursors to child adoption in Ebonyi State. Where a couple have not had a child after sexual union that have lasted for sometime without achieving pregnancy, they tend to become restless and start looking for solution, whether medically or spiritually, and in Africa, both measures are taken. Where solution is not found, and the couple is ageing, they may seek solution of realizing a child through child adoption.

There is male infertility and female infertility. Male infertility according to Abamara *et al* (2018), is due to a mans deficiency in semen quality that result in reduced fecundity. Female infertility can also be caused by ovulatory problems that manifest by sparse or absent menstrual period which may be drug induced or infection induced. According to them, known causes of infertility include sexually transmitted infections, D.N.A. damage, Hypothalamic Pituitary factors, Tobacco smoking, and toxins such as glues, volatile organic solvents, physical agents, chemical ducts and pesticides. Impotency which is inability to perform the sexual act due to inability to achieve erection by a man can also result in childlessness and can be regarded as a cause for male infertility while barrenness is a woman's inability to bear children. The cause may originate either from any of the problems mentioned earlier. A woman's state if barrenes, when determined serves as a reason for the Ebonyi person to seek solution of how to get children outside of the woman. Assisted

Reproductive Technology options such as Artificial insemination and In vitro Fertilisation are sometimes used to achieve birth children. Artificial insemination is the deliberate introduction of sperm into a female's cervix or uterine cavity for the purpose of achieving pregnancy by a means other than sexual intercourse (Swanson, 2012). Beneficiaries of this form of treatment is women who desire to give birth to their own children but are lesbians or in heterosexual relationship but their male partners are infertile or are suffering some physiological impairment that does not allow sexual intercourse to take place. This technology is practiced in Ebonyi State through the activities of Vesico Vagina Fistula Center of the Federal Ministry of Health Abakaliki. Also, In vitro fertilization which was pioneered by Robert Edward and Patrick Steptoe for the birth of Louise Brown on 25th July 1975 in United States of America is practiced in the aforementioned health facility. According to Nordqvist (2018) "In vitro fertilization" literally means "glass fertilization" In vivo fertilization refers to fertilisation of the egg by the sperm inside the body as obtained through sexual intercourse while in vitro fertilization is fertilisation of the egg by the sperm outside the body where sperm retrieved from a male is artificially fused with egg retrieved from a woman and kept under laboratory condition for fertilisation to take place. The new embryo is subsequently reintroduced into the woman's uterine walls for successful implantation that is now regarded as pregnancy, which is carried to full term of gestation for birth of a new baby to occur. However the scope of this work does not support a discussion on these alternate Assisted Reproductive Technologies because the average Ebonyi Christian couple cannot afford their cost, hence it is irrelevant here.

2.1.2 Couple

Cambridge (2017) describes couple as two or a few people who are in some way connected. It is two people who are married or in a romantic relationship. It is also used to refer to two persons who engage in sex. In recent times, two persons of same sex are referred

to as couple when they choose to be married and subsequently engage in sexual intercourse. Such marriage is referred to as same sex marriage. Because the sex organ of both members of such marriage is same, they cannot produce birth children. Such male couple is termed homosexual while such females are called lesbians. Such marriage is called gay marriage. Infertility therefore does not apply with such couple. However such couple may desire to have children who will take care of them at old age. The most convenient option for them therefore is child adoption.

Some western cultures have legalized same sex marriage. However, no Igbo society approves nor legalized gay marriage but regarded sex between such persons as an abomination. Christianity that was introduced to Ebonyi people perceives it as sinful and attracts eternal damnation. Such couples are not represented in this study. A couple in this study therefore is a man and woman who are married or proposed to marry and engage in sex for the purpose of producing children. Sex and pregnancy outside the confines of marriage is frowned at and attracts shame and stigmatization. It is branded “*ime mkpuke*” and is the major reason why teenagers who become pregnant resort to ‘baby factory’ to hide from the shame that their sexual escapade has brought on them.

2.1.3. Adoption

Adoption has its root from the Greek work “*huiiothesia*”, meaning, to place as a son (Stibbe, 2005). It stems from the Latin word “*adoptare*” meaning to take by choice, choose for oneself, select. Adoption according to online Etymology dictionary is, a legal proceeding that creates a parent-child relation between persons not related by blood. The adopted child is entitled to all privileges belonging to a natural child of the adoptive parents including the right to inherit. It is the act of accepting with approval; favorable reception.

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. Ojelabi *et al* (2015) described it as a universal concept that provides legal rights for adopter and adoptee to become a family. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child 1989 recognised child adoption as an alternative means of caring for children who are temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment, including children who are unable to remain in their family environment (Chukwu, 2012). In their own view, Aniebue & Aniebue in Ojelabi *et al* (2015) defined child adoption as a universal concept that provides legal right for the adopter and adoptee to become a family. They all seem to agree that adoption is a creation of law not custom, that incorporates an adoptee in a biologically "strange" family, with the rights and privileges of a natural child.

According 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. This apparent rejection could be at the risk of the child's life, as noticed in cases of teenagers who resort to abortion to save themselves the shame and stigma attached to pregnancy outside of wedlock. Similarly, the adopter is also desirous to be saved from the stigma attached to infertility and childlessness (Brooke *et al*, 2012). Also he is willing to take daring steps just to ensure that he begets children of his own, who inturn will succeed him as heir. The society therefore perceives this 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).

The concept of adoption is derived from the Roman culture dated about 50B.C (UNICEF, 2011). According to Stibbe (2005), it is a transaction in persons where the adopter, in agreement with his spouse, perhaps for the purpose of preserving a family name (*pater familias*) approaches his slave who has children and is willing to give one out in adoption and by doing so, liberating such a child from the bondage of slavery. The transaction is carried out before a magistrate in a proceeding known as *Adoptio sensu strictu*, where money changes hands and the adopted persons is transferred to the adopter. On completion of this transaction, the adopted person automatically by this act enters into a new authority –*Patria Potestas*, otherwise known as fatherly authority to become a *Sui heredes* –heir apparent (Stibbe, 2005). Stibbe (2005) described this narrative ironically as “the sale of a son” (p.30). This therefore agreed with Ojelabi *et al's* (2015), legal perception of adoption as the binding of an adopter and adoptee as family, to provide the adopted child with permanent care, surname, right and privileges of a biological child, including rights of inheritance. They added that by this, a relationship of consanguinity is established. Consequently, marriage or sexual relationship between the child and the adopters family is prohibited (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs). Adoption process on completion becomes irrevocable except where fraud, duress or undue influence is exerted on any of the parties involved (Tajudeen, 2013). Child adoption is a statutory or social transaction for the placement of a child in a home of non-consanguineous parents with right, privileges and filiations of a birth child.

Among the Ebonyi people, child adoption is conceived variously. Ojelabi *et al's* (2015) study indicated that 80% of respondents are aware of child adoption in the South East, just to support its popularity in Ebonyi State. The commonest knowledge of child adoption is based on what is referred to as kinship adoption which is mutually agreed placement of children in homes of relatives without involvement of relevant agencies (Agbo, 2014). This practice however is deficient of the known intrinsic qualities of child adoption. In Agbo's

(2014) view, a child may lose his or her parents to death, or perhaps, they are too poor or sickly to care for the child. Grandparents, uncles, aunts or even any close relative may take in the child in what is referred to as kinship adoption. The child will however continue to bear the names of his biological parents, inherit land and other entitlements through his paternity and eventually return to same family.

These practices deviate from child adoption as conceived in the Greco-Roman world, where the concept originated. Kinship adoption can therefore be best referred to as what Nwaoga (2013) and Ojelabi *et al* (2015) termed guardianship or fostering respectively, because child adoption to Nwaoga (2015) is "intended to effect a permanent change in status of the child and as such requires societal recognition" (p.706). Ekwunife (2016) corroborated the role of the society, by stating that "the society creates kinship relations and gives meaning and legal status" (p.115). Such legal status is often along bloodline of male children. Inheritance therefore is patrilineal in Africa and places a lot of demand on consanguineous procreation (Agbo, 2014). Lately, the practice of kinship adoption is waning while formal child adoption is increasingly becoming popular.

Child adoption is also conceived by some as buying a motherless baby without recourse to the basic pre-qualifications to adopt or be adopted (Omosun & kofoworola, 2011). Agbo (2014) corroborating, equated the buying of a baby with the purchase of confectioneries. This conception agrees with the process of acquiring babies through a baby factory where money simply changes hands, for a barren woman to become a mother overnight (Omeire *et al*, 2015). The ease with which babies are realized at the baby factories just for affording the cost, without other considerations for the adoptees safety and well being, does not align with legal dictates for adoption in Nigeria.

Further, the spontaneity in realizing a child through buying implicates child stealing in the guise of adoption (Omeire, 2015). It also aids faked pregnancy or pseudo pregnancy according to Omeire (2015) because the date of purchasing a child can be decided, to tally with the normal length or duration of pregnancy, thereby giving the impression that the woman was able to conceive and give birth naturally. “Buying” is not an ideal type of child adoption as it is often done without an “Adoption Order” obtained from a court of law and duly registered in the adoption registers of the court and the National Population Commission, as required by the 2003 Childs Right Act (Chukwu, 2011). However this can be remedied

Absence of an adoption order criminalises the acquisition of babies through baby factories and predisposes the adopter to accusations of child trafficking and its consequences (Salihu *et al*, 2016). Adoption Order also gives the child, social and legal legitimacy as Omeire (2016) pointed out that it “becomes offensive and illegal for anyone or group to refer to such adoptee as illegitimate or deny the individual any right or privilege due children born in wedlock” (p. 94). Often, people who acquire babies through baby factories are ignorant of the need for an adoption order, perhaps because of the ease with which their need was met.

Ojelabi *et al* (2015) credited the heightened knowledge and right conception of child adoption to the passage of 2003 Child Right Act. To them, this law popularized child adoption as judicial or administrative authorization to take another person’s child as ones own, with parental rights and obligations, permanently transferred from the child’s natural parents to the adopter (Chukwu, 2011).

Similar to this definition, is Black’s Law Dictionary definition as cited by Omeire (2016). It holds that adoption is the legal process pursuant to state statute, whereby a child’s legal right and duties towards his natural parents, are terminated permanently and

subsequently transferred to his adoptive parents. This is consummated through the issuance of an adoption order, by a law court, thereby giving the child, equal legal status with any natural child of the adoptive parents. Legally speaking, adoption affords the adoptee the authority to use the adoptive parent's name as surname, claims to entitlement of inheritance from the adoptive parents,

some religions like Islam, where an adoptee can only inherit from his natural parents (Muslims Women Shura Council, 2011). Njoku in Omeire (2016b) noted that in Nigeria, under customary law, the concept of with corresponding loss of such claims and authority from his natural parents, as held by Nwaogugu in Omeire (2016).

However, there are exceptions to claims to inheritance in adoption in modern or statutory sense is not recognized, as fosterhood, guardianship or kinship adoption since it is mandatory for the adoptee to go back to his biological ancestral family and lay claims to inheritance there. To Njoku, parent-child relationship is sacred, mystical and cannot be easily severed, as kinship adoption is only a traditional social welfare scheme for the care of indigent children.

The 2003 Childs Right Act prohibits any sexual relationship between an adoptee and members of the adoptive family (Chukwu, 2011). Consequently, marriage is abhorred in any situation where sex cannot be enjoyed by the adoptee. This perhaps is anchored on Kendal's (2005) opinion that the law views and treats an adoptee as an integral member of the adoptive family. As a member of the family, in Igboland, *omenani* which is the custom of the people, is the means by which the social ethos is measured, social values are continued through generations and education of the young ones are facilitated through socialization (Ilogu, 1974). It is the moral guide of the people and instrument of social control (Ekwunife, 2016). The Igbos abhors sex between blood relations as sanctioned by the *Ala/Ani* deity (Arinze,

1970). Hence, incest is both a social and religious restriction for the control of human actions in the society.

An adopted child therefore is given same equal status both socially and religiously by the application of restriction of sexual relations between an adoptee and members of the adoptive parent's family. Islam however permits sexual relations between an adoptee and members of the adoptive family because, to them, child adoption in the Euro-American sense is not applicable but rather *kafala* (Ahmad, 1999). To Ahmad (1999), *kafala* is the commitment to voluntarily sponsor the care, maintenance, education and protection of a child, the way a birth parent will do, but not subsisting. This is a social welfare mechanism for the care of children, akin to fosterhood.

2. 1.4. Child

The word child is relative to the individual who is considering it. Generally, everybody born by natural conception is a child to the person that gave birth to him or her irrespective of the age, gender or status. However, within the context of child adoption, a child refers to a person that is young and under the tutelage of an elder. Various scholars, schools of thought and even cultures have tried to define a child. Hornby (2001) defines a child as a daughter or son who is still a minor or below age of responsibility and accountability, descent from a tribe, race or people. An offspring, born or considered a product of culture or place.

African philosophy perceives a child as “being” or “human becoming” rather than human being who through the process of socialization and ritualization is shaped into fully shaped adult human being (James *et al*, 1998). The term “being” refers to a living entity that has the biological qualities of a living organism like a neonate without specialized character traits. The process and time lag of attaining or acquiring specialized character traits is the state of “human becoming”. The “being” therefore lacks “personality” which is the totality of somebody attitudes, interests, behavioural patterns, emotional responses, social roles and

other individual traits that endure over long periods of time. Menkiti (1984) argues that without a long process of social and ritual transformation; which accord the child with “the full competences, definitive of man” children and newborns are referred to as “it”. To him, “being” status attributed to a new born child is a lesser one devoid of personhood for personhood is attained over time with the acquisition of knowledge of social norms and values. This agrees with Plato’s opinion that some children never become rational until very late in life (Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014). Likewise, among Africans, there are some persons irrespective of their age, who remain with the label “child” until they meet the socio-religious demands of leaving that stage, hence, failing to attain personhood. Among the Igbo, such beings are not given burial funerals at death, because they lack personhood. African and Western societies display an intense sense for demand to have children. Africans will go to any length to find remedy to childlessness. (Mbiti, 1969). Ndofirepi (2014) contrasting African value for children with others, posits that the values for children in Africa is same elsewhere around the globe.

The child is regarded as delicate, needing extra attention and protection especially at birth. Birth of a child is the beginning of a new being, striving towards personhood. As a “being” that is just “beginning,” childhood need understanding, adult help and invariably, protection, being incapacitated (Leal, 2005). Africans and indeed humanity are devoted to the development and social, intellectual and physical security of the child from harm. Among Africans, this security is provided within the matrix of the African principle of group solidarity and harmony. According to Hansungule (2005), everybody is responsible for the other. The inequality in strength and status is neutralized by the commonality of existence. Mbiti (1969) intoned it as “I am because you are, and because you are, therefore I am”.

Consequent on the religious inclination of traditional Africans, childhood goes beyond the present state of existence. The belief in reincarnation among Africans alludes to

one's state of existence which is cyclic. Ezekwugo (1971) points out that to the Africans, life portends existence even before birth but only manifests in the birth of a child. It runs through to old age and death, just to reincarnate; thereby starting a new cycle (Ndofirep and Shumba, 2014). Childhood is a state in the circle of life.

A child is like a piece in a chain in Africa. Community sense among Africans and its socialization scheme into dimensions of authority is based on age and security. Childhood is the earliest stage, the child is perceived to be most susceptible to be morally "bad" if not addressed by strict discipline and parental constraint that must be employed by all in the community (Cunningham 1995). Seniority in age composes the ontological scheme of authority for enforcing discipline, irrespective of blood relationship (Hansungule, 2015). Even modern and westernized enactments as contained in African Children's Charter (ACC) article 31, demand the respect from children towards not just their parents but superiors and elders at all times.

The child is believed to be curious and Locke in Ndofirepi and Shumba (2014) perceives this attitude as appetite for knowledge. This curious and inquisitive mind of the child does not allow the child to question an adult; the reservoir of knowledge, wisdom and power or authority (Muyila, 2006). In conclusion, Erny (1981) describes a child as... "a man in the state of nature not yet changed by society, naked like the first human beings, without a feeling of shame, ignorant, unconscious of his condition and destiny with an intact body and an intelligence which is still opaque and veiled"(p.31).

Social roles of the child are assigned, and value attached to the gender of the child, in Africa. Ndofirepi and Shumba (2014) differentiated the role of boys who later turn men, as repositories of creative power for increase and multiplicity of humanity; from the girl child who is deemed weaker and inferior as she brings forth children to her husband. Africans

therefore place high premium on male children who will continue the life of the family, the lineage and the clan and race by blood relationship.

There is therefore the need to review the world view of the Igbo, in order to appreciate the mindset of an Ebonyi Christian as he grapples with the need of a child in the face of childlessness. He cannot resort to traditional Igbo panacea to childlessness which is polygyny and still he cannot readily adopt a child as supported by the Euro-Christian religion. Childlessness is often blamed on the woman in Africa except where there is medical proof that the man is responsible. Even when he is adopting with some existing biological children, the place of the adopted child in the midst of those birth children is a source of worry especially where the adoption is known to the birth children who will not be willing to give up their inheritance and rights to the adopted child. Autochthony that emphasize inheritance through a birth father figure is an Igbo culture that gives impetus to denial of an adopted child's inheritance or allotment of landed property.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The following theories were reviewed in this work. These theories have been found suitable for analysing the various categories around child adoption. They include Family systems theory, Family Stress theory and Conversion Theory.

2.2.1 Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory otherwise referred to as “ecological systems theory, bio-ecology theory or human ecology theory”, was propounded by the American psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and states that human action and development are influenced by the different types of environmental systems. Actions and developments in man are mutually shaped or determined by the interaction between the individual and his or her environment, designated as eco-systems that are of different levels. The adoption triad as individual

persons namely; the adoptee, the adoptive parents and the birth mother or teenager, respond to the various environmental influences around them such as parents, friends, time, school, work, culture and so on. Terming it bio-ecology theory, Bronfenbrenner (1993) appreciated the biological composition of man that is regarded as the nature factor in the determination of a person's action like the genetic composition (Berger, 2012).

The adoptee, adopter and even the birth mother react the way they do, at the face of the crisis or stress they individually find themselves in, according to their environmental dispositions. These environments which Bronfenbrenner termed eco-systems are the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system, the macro-system and the chrono-system. The micro-system is the institutions and groups that most immediately and directly impact on the individuals to shape his actions, such as the family members, school or office, including religious institutions like church or traditional beliefs, neighborhood, including village or city settings and peers. The meso-system is the relations, interconnections or interaction between the various individuals, groups and institutions in the microsystem. These include the relationship between the individual and the church or the traditional religion, peers at work, school and even the family. Family is perceived as two or more persons living together, related by blood, marriage or adoption (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A family can also be described as a bio-social group that accommodates different levels of social organization in different cultures.

Psychological conditions like stigmatization occur in relationships within the microsystem. Agunbiade *et al* (2009) citing an instance of the negative influence of the society on an individual's personal attribute, explains the crisis situation that is associated with infertility, childlessness, unwanted or teenage pregnancy and the status of an adoptee in the society.

The exosystem is the linkages that may exist between two or more settings, one of which may not contain the individual but affect him indirectly nonetheless. People and places that the individual may not be interacting with, may still affect him. For example, such people and places may be a child at school, who when abused or called a bastard at school, may cause the parents to grapple the same child as an arrogant child at home. Consequent on the event at school which did not directly emanate from the parents, they may have to suffer as a result of the child's abuse at school. A parent's promotion at work, which does not affect the spouse who is at home, can enhance the spouses desire and interest in child adoption as the financial capacity of the parent to adopt is enhanced. The eco-system of the parent's workplace does not directly affect the spouse at home but has affected his or her decision.

The macrosystem is the traits exhibited by the largest and most distant collection of people and places to the individual, which significantly influence him. It comprises of cultural patterns, values, dominant beliefs, ideas, political, and economic systems. World views convey these elements mentioned above. Therefore they differentiate one group of persons from others. Yet, while interacting, they produce strong effects on the individual. The meeting of Euro-Christian world views in the minds of an Igbo Christian doubtless produces a different result on the subject of child adoption. The basis of credibility, when sought after, leaves the Igbo Christian in a state of dilemma.

The chrono-system according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) is the involvement of time dimension in the change and constancy in the individual's environment. Chrono-system refers to changes in some organs of the microsystem like family structure, finances, education, and status and so on. For instance, a relatively wealthy, educated but aged individual is more likely to favour child adoption as a solution to childlessness more than a teenager (Ojelabi *et al*, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner's theory therefore is suitable to analyse all the cumulative of systems that simultaneously interplay and interrelate, though divergent, to determine the peculiar reactions of each individual in the adoption triad. Each system contains norms, roles and rules that shape psychological development. A teenage girl from an enlightened and affluent family background, pregnant out of wedlock is likely to keep her baby than one from a poor illiterate background, who is most likely to take refuge in a baby factory, only to profit from her mistake by receiving money from the adoption of the baby (Omeire, 2015).

2.2.2 Family Stress Theory of Child Adoption

According to Omeire (2016) marriages can be fractious owing to lack of biological children hence childlessness in Igboland is a major reason for stress in family. Family stress theory propounded by Reuben Hills (1994), also called Hill's ABC-X model, 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 mechanisms 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 and so on, that form "B" and "C", the perception of childlessness by the society, the culture and religions define the crisis. (Patterson, 2002).

The "X" factors 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 adoption, Alternative Reproductive Technology, (ART), remarriage and so on, they 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 Igbos. Names like “*Amaechina*”, (“may my gates not be closed,”) “*Ahamefula*” (may my name not be lost) are not just names alone but a reflection of the utmost desires and prayers of the people. Anyanwu (1999) insist that among Africans, names are unequivocal expressions of religious beliefs and conditions of the people. They are not just abstract terms shrouded in ambiguities but pregnant with meaningful symbolic importations. Prayers also to Ifesieh (1989) , are a reflection of the ontological order and mans contingency towards the Divine that accommodates petition of “the fundamental thing which is life (*ndu*)” (103). The closure of a family gate is symbolic of the termination of life, existence or lineage of a family. This must be prayed against, through the use of such names.

According to Goldberg *et al* (2010), adoption has historically been stigmatized as a second best route to parenthood. Couples’ disagreement on adoption or one of the couples disagreement, poses a problem for the family and where there is an adopted child; for the child as well. Interaction of opinion of the culture, religion and society, inform stigmatization, with the family members.

2.2.3 Conversion Theory

Propounded by Humphery J. Fisher’s (1973), the conversion theory also referred to as Fisher’s tripartite or marginalisation model, based on Trimminghan’s analogy, suggested three stages of conversion which he called, the “Quarantine, Mixing and Reform stages” (p.31).The quarantine stage is when the coming faith is “orthodox” as it represents the arrival of new comers, possibly traders, religious clerics or refugees who introduced the alien religion to a

native community. Initially, little or no converts were made and the purity of the religion was intact.

The mixing stage was noticed when the indigenous people gradually began to join the new religion, as they combined their traditional beliefs with the alien beliefs and practices. After the lapse of a long period of time, some devoted priests who kept the elements of the quarantine or orthodoxy stage through the tools of literacy, started a reformation that to return the mixers, in a new form of conversion, to the former orthodoxy. To Fisher, conversion through these stages was not strictly uniform; hence people of these various stages will be noticed at all times. Apart from literacy which he saw as a veritable tool for conversion, he noted that conquest was also a powerful solvent of traditional beliefs.

Fisher's conversion theory is relevant in this work as it goes to explain the syncretic stance of the Igbo Christian who seems to hold on to his traditional religious values as he claims to have been converted to Christianity. The traditional religion of Igbo is relatively homogenous as it shares a common feature. Scholars however, argue over the name "African religion or African religions," (Idowu, 1973, Mbiti, 1969). The indigenous religion of Africans, have always been confronted by the alien religions of Christianity and Islam in parts of Africa. Their worldviews are always opposed to, and strive to stifle each other, typical of worldviews (Madu, 1997). The historical trend of conversion of Africans from their indigenous religion to these alien religions can be said to be similar. Hence the theory safely applies to the process of conversion in Igboland and Ebonyi people in particular, that have left the Ebonyi Christian in a syncretic posture, depriving him the liberty to adopt, without recourse to his traditional religious beliefs.

To Fisher (1973), first conversion is change of religious affiliation like traditional religion to Christianity without orthodoxy. The orthodox Christianity of the Catholic

missions and the Church Missionary Society applies here. Second conversion is the influx of the natives with their traditional beliefs, into the church that saw the mixing of the alien and the indigenous beliefs, evident in the acts of the African Independent Churches. Over a period of time, another phase of conversion has been noticed in Igboland, metamorphosing into the acts of the evangelicals, revivalists or protestant orthodox fervency. The new religious movements, as Madu (2003) described how western science and education have influenced their acts, confirm Fisher's submission that literacy has enhanced conversions in Africa. Even the "church school" strategy that the missionaries introduced on their arrival in Igboland, to convert the natives, agrees with the role of literacy in conversion of the Africans.

Fisher further clarified the differences between conversion and adhesion. To Fisher as cited by Metuh (1987), conversion is a "deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier piety to another" (p.17). Adhesion "allows a believer to adopt new forms of worship as useful supplements to his former beliefs" (p.17).

The puzzle in the "syncretic" stance of the Ebonyi Christian of contemporary times, is whether there was no conversion before now, suggesting that what had been, is adhesion or, whether there was conversion but the Igbo Christian is now returning to the former stage of mixing, in which Fisher noted that the three cycles can repeat itself.

There are Igbo pastors, priests, "born again Christians" and individuals who still uphold the value for children which is a universal need. In the face of infertility, they resort to adoption, irrespective of the traditional undertones, just to uphold their faith. Such persons are considered by Fisher to be at the fervency stage. No doubt, there are priests, pastors, and even born again Christians who can easily relapse in the face of childlessness and resort to the traditional panacea to infertility through polygyny, levirate or surrogate arrangements, to

have consanguineous birth child. This posture suggests the mixing stage of Fisher. There are also Igbo Christians who are not fervent or orthodox but are simply church members because it is acclaimed that Igbo are predominantly Christians. Such persons will not hesitate to seek solutions to their life crises situations within the purview of their traditional religion. These could be said to be at the “adhesion” stage. All of these Igbo Christians live in this era and it may remain so for a very long time.

Culture is dynamic and evolve or develop their values within their own environment (Okodo, 2005). Religion is part of culture as Unoh in Okodo (2005) defines cultures as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other abilities acquired by men. This agrees with Madu’s (1997) basic elements of religion, namely; beliefs, morals and cults. Common characteristics of religion and culture, as identified by Okodo (2005) support the argument on the commonality of both elements of the society. Cultural or Religious dynamism presupposes that there must be Iconoclasm which embodies the mentality of one culture for different reasons. Okodo (2005) noted that Iconoclasts, reject cultures or behave anticulturally often because of ill knowledge. Some Christians may perhaps reject the cultural practice of child adoption because they are not well informed. Put differently, their knowledge of the dynamics and implications of child Adoption does not synchronize with their germane knowledge in traditional provisos for realizing a birth child. Ojelabi *et al* (2015), corroborated this view by noting that higher educational background predisposes an individual, to most likely adopt than illiteracy.

Cultural and Religious dynamism also supports Kellner as cited by Ritzer’s (2008) theory of techno-capitalism in which, a technical and scientific knowledge play a role, parallel to human labour power of earlier eras to produce a configuration of new modes of societal organization and forms of culture and everyday life. Simply put, changing technology amounts to changing culture which in sex selection, cloning, child adoption and

so on, are implicated and cannot be left out. All that makes the differences is knowledge and information.

2.3. Emperical Studies

This section reviews three works or studies on Child adoption in Igboland to underscore the challenges experienced by parties involved, making the choice of adoption for a child, a difficult one.

Ojelabi, *et al* (2015) in their work, “Policies and Practices of Child Adoption, in Nigeria, a review paper”, described child adoption as a universal concept that provides legal rights for an adopter and adoptee to become a family, bearing a common surname and the adoptee assumes the right, privileges and responsibilities of a biological child, on completion of the adoption process. To them, adoption is a global panacea, or management option for the problem of infertility. Although there is wide knowledge of the meaning of Child Adoption among Nigerians and people of the South Eastern states of Nigeria, also referred to as Igboland, it has not received full acceptance. From their findings, 80% of respondents to the studies they reviewed know what is child adoption based on the practice of kinship Adoption which is the mutually agreed placement of children in homes of relatives without involvement of relevant agencies. This is likened to forstering in South Eastern Nigeria. Knowledge of agency or institutionalised adoption is however very low. The passage of child's Right Act of 2003 seems to have increased awareness of Child Adoption but unfortunately, acceptability and practice of Child Adoption in the region and the nation at large is relatively low due to “socio-cultural implications, financial burden, stigmatization and procedural bottlenecks among other reasons” (p. 7).

To them, the practice of kinship adoption is drastically declining while the notion of child adoption as “buying a motherless baby” is strong because their study revealed that such

opinion holders do not know the requirements needed to adopt or who can adopt. The authors underscored the high esteem with which procreation is held in the various cultures in Nigeria and the perception that children are priceless benefits in marriage. To them, infertility among couples which have recorded more than 70% globally and 20%-45% in Nigeria being the highest in sub-saharan Africa have been frustrating the goal of marriage which can be checked through Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). Unfortunately, the later's high cost has made it elusive to Nigerians, as they cited Adewumi *et al* (2012), Adetoro & Ebomoyi (1991). Hence, child adoption has become a relatively affordable infertility management option for Nigerians.

They also identified other factors that have favored the option of child adoption in Nigeria, to include preference for a particular gender of child, increased intractable infertility, 'lack of a living child, level of education, income of household and level of knowledge of adoption policies and processes' (p.76). According to them, "the common reasons for unwillingness to adopt range from socio-cultural, psychological to religious bias" (p.76).

They admitted that the practice of child adoption is gradually gaining ground in the South East, but is still challenged by some factors earlier mentioned. To Ojelabi *et al* (2015), the provisions of part xii of the Child Rights Act, 2003, as guidelines and procedures for adoption is in actual practice, relatively cumbersome due to various red-tapes in Nigeria welfare and judicial system. This encourages unofficial or illegal adoption practices that are less rigorous and sometimes less expensive. It has also turned into normal business that is carried out by unethical persons as baby factory, for baby harvesting (p. 78).

The actors in the baby factories are the young women and teenage girls who are trafficked through false promises of job and safe abortion. There are men who impregnate them for a fee. When the girls are delivered of their babies, the operators of such homes sell

them to desperate infertile couples, other patronizers who wish to avoid the rigours of agency adoption such as ritual killers, who need the babies for black magic, sexual exploiters and fake fertility treatment operators. Ojelabi *et al* (2015) described the practice of unofficial adoption emanating from the baby factory as complex with multiplicity of perpetrators and victims and variety of issues including fake pregnancies, trafficking in-persons, deceit, fraud, and poverty.

Ojelabi *et al* (2015) noted that formal child adoption has crept into Nigerian culture and consequently encounters ethnic issues and challenges. Citing Igboland, they aptly hinted that complex ethno-religious behaviours, beliefs and practices make the formal practice of child adoption, difficult. In their views, the culture of the Igbo does not accept adopted children as biological children of the adoptees, but rather adoptees are treated as bastard or outcasts. They are sometimes, hated, disrespected and constantly reminded of their background. They cited Nwaoga's (2013) allusion to "*onyebiarabia*" meaning stranger, to authenticate the ingrained Eastern indigenous ideology and caste system that supports the denial of an adopted child, the benefits and privileges of a full member of the community.

Ojelabi *et al* (2015) favoured the disposition of the South Western part of Nigeria; Yorubaland towards adoption as they argued that the Yoruba cultural belief that "*ori omo lo npe omo wa ye*," meaning that a child usually attracts yet to be born children to come to the physical realm (p.79). Adopted children in a family, by this belief, enhance and attract unborn children into the family. Yet, they interjected that some Yoruba cultural beliefs, perceive adopted children as bastard, with potentials of anti-social behaviours. Consequently, infertile couples are encouraged to remarry to produce a birth child. Those willing to adopt are however, constrained by fear of tarnishing the good name and image of the family through the acceptance of an adopted "strange" child into the family.

Ojelabi *et al* (2015) identified fears, misconceptions and stigmatisation as psycho-social issues that discourage Nigerians from adopting. They observed that the fear of adopting children, conceived by drug addicts, convicted criminals, mentally retarded persons, prostitutes and the likes, is high, especially when the parental background of adoptee is not known and portend that the child is likely to exhibit the personality traits of his or her natural parents. This in scholarship implicates the nature versus nurture controversy, in determining a Child's personality trait (Omeire 2016). In fact, an in-depth study on this is imperative, to help in determining whether the nurture; upbringing of a child shapes his behaviour or nature; his biological genetic composition.

The patrilineal nature of most Nigerian communities demand that entitlement to resources or inheritance, flow from the “father figure” and is often restricted to legitimate and biological sons of the family. The role of the extended family in sharing the property of the dead deprives the adoptee from getting a fair share as they insist on biological descent. This is detrimental to the adoptee's position, and negatively affects his psycho-social development, ultimately, defeating the goal of child adoption (p. 79).

Ojelabi *et al* (2015) however failed to study the Igbo man of the twenty first century, as a composite man who has imbibed two different cultures or worldviews. Consequently he does not respond to his environment from the purview of his culture alone. The Igbo person is commonly regarded as a Christian. In fact, for him to consider adopting means he is responding to a worldview or culture yhat is alien to his own. Otherwise, the traditional Igbo solution to childlessness and infertility is polygyny (Nwaoga, 2013). This is strictly against the euro-Christian teaching on the solution to childlessness. Instead, faith in God for a biological child that must come, irrespective of the age of the woman, is the solution held by Christianity. The metaphorical teaching of the adopted status of a believer, the Christian, to God, exposes and disposes him to the notion of formal child adoption. Therefore for him to

still hold on to the ideologies mentioned by Ojelabi *et al* (2015), like bastard or outcast, stranger ideologies means that the Igbo man is projecting a complex of beliefs from two opposing worldviews, one of which favours child adoption while the other opposes it.

This complex or composite Igbo person or rather Igbo Christian, therefore deserves to be studied. Otherwise, a quick assumption like that of Ojelabi *et al* (2015) will doubtless be a misrepresentation of the Igbo person's stance on child adoption.

Nwaoga C. T. (2015) in her work "Socio-religious implications of Child Adoption in Igboland, South-Eastern Nigeria" cautioned that in Nigeria, each ethnic group has a set of critical social orders of carrying out everyday activities and mode of living. There are also social inequalities in the distribution of scarce resources. Consequently, the dynamism and peculiarity of each culture and infact individuals in the various cultures are unique. The author seems to be suggesting in her introduction, that individual responses to child adoption are dependent on the vagaries of the Socio-cultural and environmental factors (p. 705).

She underscored procreation as the major duty of a woman in rural Igboland. In fact, it is a source of personal satisfaction, social status determinant and the primary goal of marriage that determines a woman's stay in her husband's house. Nwaoga (2013) therefore maintains that Child bearing or procreation in the rural Igboland is viewed from the point of marriage and family life. A woman's infertility or childlessness is of intimate concern to her, her husband, family, society and ethnic group. Since a child secures up to 90% rights for a woman to stay in her husband's house, "no Igbo woman will like to be called barren" (p. 706). Barrenness is as a result of infertility. In recent times, there are various Assisted Reproductive Technologies aimed at addressing the problem of infertility and childlessness but due to its high cost, most infertile women resort to prayer houses for solution of miracle babies. Yet without solution, they resort to child adoption.

Nwaoga (2013) noted that in the pristine Igbo society, child adoption was not part of the culture. However, globalization brought child adoption into Igboland, but contemporarily, it is not fully accepted. Nwaoga (2013) broached the core issues that militate against the choice of Igbo Christians to adopt by mentioning the culture but failed to differentiate that culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws and any other abilities acquired by man (Okodo 2005). In other words religion is but a part of culture. Hence, we can talk of Christianity as a religion and Christian culture as basis for assessing arts, laws, morals, belief, knowledge and other abilities like science and technology. These naturally will vary from Igbo traditional religion or Igbo traditional culture- *omenani*.

The peculiarity of the Igbo Christian that this research work aims to address is the syncretic posture of the Igbo Christian who is tenaciously holding on to his traditional Igbo culture and religion but has received Euro-Christian culture and religion, through the agents of globalisation. These two religions and cultures oppose each other as they potend world views that Madu (1997) cautioned that are always striving to stifle each other. Practically, the Igbo culture hold that marriage or remarriage in polygamy, will solve infertility while western culture and western Christianity oppose polygamy but recommend other alternatives like assisted reproductive technology that trivializes blood relationship, like adoption among other options.

In the face of life crisis situation like infertility and childlessness, the Igbo Christian who is dogmatically allegiant to both religions, find it difficult to pursue solution through either of these systems. Although allegiance to Igbo traditional religion has been implicitly denied by the act of conversion, the Igbo Christian still demonstrate his belief in his traditional religion, evident in his insistence on blood child and consanguineous relations. This is hinged on “belief” which Madu (1997) identified as a basic element of religion, and hinders him from adopting, the Euro-Christian panacea to infertility and childlessness.

Nwaoga (2013) therefore did a sociological work that did not attach any seriousness to the basic driving force of the Igbo Christian nay African, who is religious in everything (Mbiti, 1997).

Beyond infertility, Nwaoga (2013) identified other situations that may prompt an Igbo Christian to adopt a child to include untimely death of perhaps a couple or the man, who is the head of a family, without a male child. The continuity of a family without a male heir to succeed a deceased person is deemed threatened and must be redressed even if it entails adopting. Also a couple who do not wish to leave the gender of their next child to chance, in a bid to expand the family size, will resort to adoption to ensure that the desired gender of a baby is realized. The author acknowledged the role of culture in prompting Child adoption by stating that only rich persons who have male children can be given titles in Igboland. Hence a rich Igbo man without a male heir will be compelled to adopt, to qualify for the title and gain heir or successor. Igbo magnanimity and hospitality also induce the Igbo Christian to adopt children although he may have his own biological children. Igbo also adopts the children of indigent relatives, due to their parent's inability to cater for them. This form of adoption however can be best described as fosterhood since the children will later return to their biological parents. It is noteworthy therefore, that Nwaoga (2013) was able to capture other persons that may indulge in Child adoption apart from an infertile Igbo Christian couple which is the target of this work.

The author also identified factors that implicate child adoption to include *Osu* caste system. To her, *Osu* is a cult slave, a living sacrifice, untouchable, an owner's cult, a slave of a deity, a sacred and holy being, who is not allowed to intermarry with *diala*, a free born and consequently is treated as a leper (p. 708).

According to Nwaoga (2013) “A child adopted into an Igbo community is sometimes treated as an outcaste mainly because the child’s background is not known (p. 708). This discriminatory attitude, adversely affect the social life of the child, which is one of the means of integrating the adopted child into the community. Nwagoa (2013) apportioned 49% of hoodluns to adopted children whose adoptive parents engaged in hawking and touting for money making and consequently exposed to the influence of bad peer influence. Also appreciable number of girls loses their virginity at a tender age because they were adopted into unfamiliar families, where their adoptive parents abused them sexually, physically assaulted them as house maid, hawkers, and sometimes for ritual purposes (p. 708).

Nwaoga (2013) observed that Igbo value legitimacy. They are patrilineal in family structure and therefore inheritance is transferred through the “father figure” which is hereditary and restricted to biological sons of the father of the family. To her, the adopted child therefore, falling short of these conditions, is regarded as a bastard and denied inheritance. Further, they have no freedom of expression. For “example, in some parts of Nsukka in Enugu state, an adopted child has no right to speak in the gathering of his kindred or he gets a penalty” (p. 709).

The author’s position on religious implication of child adoption is that because the Igbo is predominantly Christians, they must value children as precious just like Jesus Christ. Therefore they should not be discriminated against, but loved, cared for and provided for. Extending this view, the “*onyebiarabia*” indigenous ideology and its similitude, “the son of the soil syndrome”, the indigene – stranger dichotomy contradicts the Christian maxim of “all are one in Christ”, which overrides consanguinity for the quest of brotherhood in religious cohesion. She concluded her assessment of religious implications of adoption with the caution that adopted children especially when they are of decision making age, and wish to continue in the religion or denomination of their birth parents, should be allowed to do so

because compulsion in religion does not make for fervency and could pose a threat to the adoptees life.

This work has failed to address the core issues of the choice to adopt which is hinged on religion. Adoption of a child precedes the effect of adoption on the child. In other words, if a child is not adopted, he will not struggle over continuity in his birth parents religion. Therefore, this work aims to address the reluctance to adopt a child that is noticeable in the Igbo Christian, which is informed by his dilemma experience, emanating from his disposition towards Christianity and Igbo traditional religion.

Agbo, M. C. (2014) Socio- cultural challenges of child adoption in Eastern Nigeria in West Africa; Child adoption, is of complimentary essence as the world over, children are sought. While some people are unable to have them, some have but are either unwilling or unable to nurture them. Hence child adoption satiates the desire of the infertile by affording her the opportunity to have their heart desire and in return, affords the “unwanted” child a home, parental love and care that is permanent like a birth child.

Agbo (2014) adopted a mixed method study design that was both qualitative and quantitative. The study as a quantitative descriptive study made use of structured questionnaire to gather data from infertile couples in Eastern Nigeria that were selected through stratified random sampling technique. This study design is of interest because of the manner in which the data was analysed using mean scores, deviations and subsequently qualitatively analysed, a form of triangulation.

The author categorized child adoption into various types. Open adoption is the type where birth parents and adoptive parents exchange identifying information like names, addresses. In closed adoption, both parents are unknown to each other. Domestic Adoption is where both the adopter and the adoptive parents reside within the same country while

International adoption is where the adoptive parents and that of the adoptee reside in different countries. Private adoption is one that is arranged through an individual who may be a lawyer, clergy, a doctor or even a referral service. Agency adoption is one that is arranged through an adoption agency which can be private or public, with or without religious affiliation. Each type is met by a different set of legal requirements and procedures (p. 86). Delineating Eastern States of Nigeria, the Efik and Ibibio tribes, whom Agbo (2014) categorized as part of Eastern Nigeria among other Igbo states; adopt children for reasons such as infertility. To the author a woman's infertility or death of her children after she has passed child bearing age, can necessitate that she adopts especially a male child who will secure her place in her husband's home. This is because patrilineage is the criteria for inheritance in Eastern Nigeria. Therefore only a male child can inherit from his father. Where adoption bestows the status of a birth child on the adoptee, an adopted male child becomes a solution to the woman's quest for legitimacy in her husbands' home (p. 87).

Child adoption is also desired as a means of expanding the size of a family, especially in Igboland. The more children a man has, with both genders properly mixed, the higher the status of the person. Therefore Child adoption affords the adopter, the opportunity to get the desired number and genders of the children. The charitable nature of the Igbo also prompts them to adopt. Many families adopt children of poor relatives to help them. This is known as kinship adoption.

Agbo (2014) acknowledged that all the states that make up Eastern Nigeria have their individual laws regulating Child adoption but lamented that the practice have been "epileptic" due to some socio-cultural factors that paralyse the whole process of child adoption (p. 87). This work however could not give us an idea of how acceptable child adoption has been among the Igbo in contemporary times. Among the socio-cultural challenges the author discussed, is cultural norms which stigmatizes and illegitimises an adopted Child whose

biological parents are not known. Child Adoption she noted is rarely practiced but mostly among only educated people because the pre-colonial Igbo culture does not accept Child Adoption. Consequently, a rich Adopted Child cannot be made a traditional ruler in an Igbo community (p.87). He does not take part in sharing of communal land nor allowed to inherit the staff of office of the family, village or community (p.88). To Agbo (2014), public opinion states “that a slave or an *Osu* ... is better than an adopted Child because an *Osu* knows his ancestor but an Adopted Child does not know his or her origin” (p.88). He is regarded as a bastard. The bastard syndrome stem from the practice of *Osu* caste system which means cult slave, sacrifice dedicated to deities or the gods and is stigmatized. This amounts to stigmatization, denial of inheritance or rights and rejection, thereby discouraging the practice of Child Adoption.

Poverty was also identified as the reason behind the establishment of “baby factories” and the involvement of actors in the illicit trade where children were sold between #25,000 and #30,000, depending on the sex of the baby, as at May 2011 (p.87). The danger in the activities of baby factory is that fake adopters, who want babies for ritual purposes, patronize this means and ultimately kill such children in very gruesome manners. People who want to avoid the rigours of agency adoption find the ease of adopting from baby factory, most convenient while the teenage mothers suffer drop out from school and the society also bear the brunt in crimes and moral decay.

Agbo (2014) observed that powerful people in government are behind the activities of baby factory operators because of the huge profit accruable from the business. Consequently, the business thrive without culprits being arrested or punished, with all the government agencies that ought to check this illicit trade, like the State Security Services (S.S.S.), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) among others.

The author noted that age of the Adoptive parents as contained in the 1994 Child Adoption Act stipulates that adoptive parents of a first child must not exceed forty-five years and for adoptive parents with other children, should not exceed fifty years. In Eastern Nigeria, the preference for biological children compel couples to keep waiting in hope, until they reach age when they do not have economic and physical strength to train children and stand disqualified on age ground.

The author however failed to appreciate that culture is dynamic (Okodo, 2005). Cultural norms alone could not have been the reason why the Igbo of South Easterner Nigeria do not engage massively in child adoption, in preference for a birth child, without resorting to polygyny that was the order before the colonial era. Instead, religion or perhaps the world view is responsible for this chaotic situation as both depend on dogma to convey their beliefs. Madu (1997) maintained that world views are based on faith or belief, to dogmatise. Idowu (1973) on religion also hold that dogma is part of every religion and “the general pattern is that dogma tends to remain permanent and unchanging” (p.14).

According to Madu (1997), worldviews and religion breed a sense of self assurance that would not want to tolerate others. Consequently, the religion and world view of the Igbo of the South Eastern States is at the base of the discontent that the Igbo have towards Child Adoption. Arguably, religion and culture are often confused as Idowu (1973) remarked, but cautioned that “this often leads to faulty conclusion...” because “while culture covers the whole of a peoples scheme of life, religion gives direction and complexion to the scheme” (p.5).

Therefore, a clear “direction” and “complexion” of the reasons behind the scheme of cultural norms that Agbo (2014) identified as inhibitions to Child Adoption will be appreciated from the purview of religion. The Igbo traditional religion will obviously give a

“direction” of the gem or reasons why Igbo Christians who have imbibed an alien religion, Christianity that has opposing beliefs and dogma, thereby making the decision to adopt, a difficult one. Pursuing Idowu’s (1973), line of thought, the “complexion” that the religion of the Ebonyian of contemporary times, embodied in the Igbo Christian, aims to showcase, agree with Ejizu’s (1986) relevance of phenomenological approach. According to him, the diffuse nature of Igbo traditional religion has various aspects that “hang together and permeate the various levels of the social life” (p. xix). The Igbo Christian’s social life is regulated, not only by his traditional religious beliefs, but also by the alien religious beliefs that were imposed on him due to cultural superiority complex but helplessly; they all permeate his social life. The dilemma experienced by the Infertile Ebonyi Christian who can neither produce a birth child nor be helped by his traditional solution to infertility, is worsened by Christianity’s lack of a theology of Child Adoption and other social issues.

Conversion ought to have helped the situation if it presupposes “turning from past convictions” However, the syncretic nature of the Igbo Christian leaves one to wonder whether it was conversion that took place, and if so, from what, into what and for what reason was conversion in Igboland. In order to appreciate how modern adoption day practices came about, the work traced the origin of adoption from Ancient times to the Modern day adoption.. This is classified into three prominent stages in human history; namely Adoption in Ancient times, Medieval time and Modern day Adoption.

2.3.1. Adoption in Ancient Times

One of the earliest legal text referring to adoption is Babylonian code of Hammurabi dating 18th century BC (Coley and Donley, 1990). Among the Greeks, the laws of Sod on (6th CBC) and the law of code of Gortyn (5th CBC) provided that only males can be adopted by only adult males who had no legitimate descendants. If eventually a natural birth occurs

after an adoption, both children are given equal rights to inheritance. Solonic law provided for adoption by living persons otherwise termed *inter-vivos*, testamentary adoption, through the will of a deceased person or post humus adoption by a relative in the name of a deceased member of family. Adoption *inter vivos* was for support of older persons while testamentary and post humous adoption were for ancestor worship (Goody, 1969, Rubenstein, 1993).

Roman law through citations from Institutes of Gaius (161 AD) recognized two types of adoption namely, *adoptio* and *Arrogatio* or *adrogatio*, derived from the Latin *rogare*; to ask (Unicef, 2011). *Adoptio* was a ceremony by which person in their parent's power, whether male or female, was transferred to the power of an adopting person before a Judge or governor. It was regarded as emancipation from subservience, for the purpose of avoiding extinction of family, expressing political loyalty or affection, for ancestor worship and choosing a successor in the case of infertile emperors (Huard, 1956, Brosnan, 1922 & Boswell, 1988). Under the Byzantine, Emperor Justian 527-565 AD, *adoptio* was modified, replacing '*adoptio plena*'; adoption by natural ascendants like grandfathers, with simple adoption, *adoptio minus plena*- adoption without blood relationship (Gardner, 1998).

Adrogatio or *arrogatio* is derived from the Latin word *rogare*-“to ask”. This entail the adoption of persons who are not under someone else's authority “*Sui Juris*” but only required the agreement of the adoptive parent, the adoptee and the people who reserved the right to determine the citizenship of an individual. This required that the adoptee, renounced the worship of the gods of his birth family, so as to be transferred into the '*potestas*' power, authority of his adoptive father. Such adoption was done by persons not lesser than 60 years with at least an age gap of 18 years between him and exclusively male adoptee. *Sui-heredes* “right of inheritance’ was transferred strictly on agnatic line, involving only males. This is in contrast to *adoptio* which permits inheritance basically through cognatic means, insisting that ties of blood relationship were not extinguished (Gardner, 1998 , Goody, 1969).

In both *adoptio* and *arrogatio*, sexual intercourse or marriage is prohibited between the adoptee and members of the family of adoptive parents. Also, only on rare occasion was the adoption of minors allowed within this period. Emperor Justinian extended adoption to females. Under the Romans, the authority of the father over his direct family was absolute, including his slaves. Hence, he could kill any of them at will. At best, parents abandoned their children or gave them up for adoption and at will, can reclaim them by paying compensation to the adoptive parents and this discouraged adoption as it was not absolute. Emperor Constantine through an Edict stopped this practice (Goody,1969).

2.3.2. Adoption in the Medieval Times

The influence of Roman law pervaded some parts of medieval Europe like the Byzantine Empire between 33-143 A.D. However, the *Epanagoge Aucta* –a Byzantine legal code compiled in the 10th and 11th centuries made some significant changes in Roman adoption practice. For instance, it insisted that only arrogated persons were legitimate adoptees and heirs since *adoptio* permitted blood relationship. Also persons who are at least twenty years younger than their adoptive parents can be taken in (Garcic Marsilla, 1999). Women were granted permission to adopt. Hence natural birth was considered superior to adoption; the inferior. This was the beginning of stigmatization against ‘inferior’ filiations; “child adoption”.

Oblation, a practical and spiritual practice of donating a child to a convent or monastery, thereby relinquishing the parental care of the child, for keeping in Foundling homes, saw the emergence of special homes in the 12th and 13th centuries (Kertzer, 2000). This was meant as home for the orphans and the abandoned. Adoptions were made from such homes then, but they were informal and arrogation was the practice, without recourse to either birth parents or the society; people or institutions of authority. This era recognized two

types of adoption; *arrogatio* and simple adoption. *Arrogatio* was considered ideal or perfect adoption as the adoptee was placed under his or her new fathers paternal authority and made his necessary heir. Simple adoption provided that the adoptee was still subject to his or her biological fathers authority and can only inherit from his or her biological father's estate, not that of the adoptive parents (Pollact *et al*, 2004).

The first known Moscow Foundling Home was opened by Empress Catherine in 1764 for the purpose of rescuing abandoned or orphaned children and rearing them into Merchants. According to Wikipedia, Empress Catherine the great as fondly remembered in Russia along with a teacher, Ivan Betskay conceived the idea of manufacturing "ideal citizens" from abandoned children for the Russian State in the Enlightenment Age. She built a state-of-the-art, state controlled orphanage spanning 379 meters footage on Moskva River. By early 19th century, the number of children in Foundling homes rose to 11,000 in Moscow, 5000 in paris, and 25000 in Florence, clearly indicating that these children were not being adopted in large number due to their presumed illegitimacy and the stigma against them. (Ransel, 1988).

Minors, referring to babies and infants were taken into care, under the proviso of "benevolent guardianship". This arrangement was only an obligation of supporting the ward, bringing him up and putting him in a situation to gain his livelihood (Unicef, 2011). Such children however can be adopted when they are adults or at the death of the guardian in a practice similar to Greek testamentary adoption.

Due to economic and social constraints on the upkeep of orphanages and workhouses otherwise known as almshouses in the United States, such as high cost of feeding and educating the inmates, high mortality rates attending it and stigma attached to such homes, alternative measure for the care of the children emerged. This was called Boarding out; a practice where a child is placed with a family instead of institutionalization. In Australia,

“baby farms” where “unwanted” and illegitimate” children were looked after for a fee, emanated (Kociumbas, 1997 & Shonley, 1989). Under the above arrangements, children were forcibly moved from institutions within the United States in the so called “orphan trains” to different parts of United States under the auspices of the Children Society of New York, without formal adoption (O’ Conner, 2001).

2.3.3. Modern Day Adoption

The effects of First World War on the global population saw influenza Epidemic of 1918 and the legal status of children that were separated from their parents permanently as a source of concern that needed countries to redefine. Hence different countries had to revisit their adoption laws. England and Wales passed the first adoption law-the adoption of children Act in 1926 (Huard, 1956). Tanzania, formerly Tanganyika passed the first adoption law in Africa, known as the 1942 Adoption of infants ordinance, after the order of the 1926 English Adoption of Children Act. This among others provides that birth mothers loose parental rights on adoption of their child (Unicef, 2011).

In Nigeria the first known adoption law was referred to as the “Adoption Law of Eastern States” of Nigeria comprising of the current Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers States. Adoption Edict of 1968 was enacted by Lagos State following that of the East. Currently, virtually every state in Nigeria have adoption statutes except states in the Northern parts of the country which are predominantly inhabited and controlled by Moslems and their anti-adoption stance (Chukwu, 2012). Following various regional and international treaties on the right and protection of the child, Nigeria enacted the 2003 Child’s Right Act, and part xii dealt extensively on the regulation of Adoption in Nigeria. According to Chukwu (2012), this law can be enforced, only in Abuja,

the Federal Capital Territory as socio-religious dichotomies have limited the efficacy of these laws especially in places like the Northern states.

2.4. Summary of Literature Review

Adoption is not the sale of a son as conceived within the Roman culture dating about 50BC. (United Nation,2009). It is a creation of filial exigency by man for satisfying procreative yearnings. It is a voluntary acquisition of a non biologically related person for conferring the rights, privileges and duties of a biological child on such a person, When adoption process in Igboland is completed, it becomes irreversible.

Historically, adoption has gone through the ancient times when it started up till recent times, with changes in the practice, to reflect the level of intellectual reasoning of the time. The Igbo Christian is a complex man, composed of both his traditional ethno-religious qualities and that of Christianity that was imposed on him by the colonial masters and their cohorts.

The Family Systems Theory described the working of the Adoptive family and the various systemic interrelationships that influence the decision to adopt a child.. It goes to show how the macro-system which is attitudes, beliefs, values, practices and convictions shared in the society at large summed up as the culture, affect the other systems like micro and exosystem. The enigmatic nature of the culture produced by the contact of Christianity and African traditional religion, poses a dilemma to the infertile Ebonyi Christian on whether or not to engage in the Act of Adoption. The family stress theory lends support to Child Adoption as a stress management option,, an alternative, though not considered the best desired but the best available option. The stress of lack of a biological child is therefore effectively managed through adoption.

The literatures reviewed have shown how Socio-cultural factors have hampered the choice of Child Adoption as a stress management strategy for realizing a birth child, among the Ebonyians. They are predominantly Christians but have not abandoned their traditional religious convictions, thereby producing in them; a complex being that is not subscribed to the new but alien religion, Christianity nor to the traditional or indigenous religion that he is converted from. He can neither freely adopt a child due to his traditional religious beliefs nor can remarry or embark on polygamy without “raised eyebrows” due to his avowed Christian religion. The power of religion cannot be underestimated. (Ezeaku, 2013). This work therefore is aimed at filling the gap which the previous studies have left, by critically but methodically, exposing the confusion that the meeting of these two religions has caused in the minds of the infertile Igbo Christians, which have not encouraged Child adoption.

Other works reviewed have dealt on sociological factors affecting the decision to adopt, leaving out the spiritual aspect of it, which is the driving force. This work which is captioned “The challenges of child adoption; a socio-religious discourse on the Ebonyi Christian couple’s experience” is mostly needed to fill the lacuna left by these previous

CHAPTER THREE

CHILD ADOPTION AMONG CHRISTIANS IN EBONYI

3.1. Brief Ethnography of Ebonyi State.

3.1.1 Ebonyi People and their Culture

Ebonyi State is geographically located at the Northern part of the South East of Nigeria. The State was created as a political entity by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria on 1st October 1996 under Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, with thirteen local Government Areas. They include Abakaiki, Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ivo, Izzi, Ohaozara, Ebonyi, Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, Ishielu, Ohaukwu and Onicha. It has a population of about 1.7 million people, as at 2013 (Ebonyi State: 2007). The State is bound on the South by Abia State, on the North by Benue State, on the West by Enugu and on the East by Cross River State, With a land area covering approximatey 5,935km², lying between latitudes 7.30'E & 8.30'E and longitudes 5.40'N & 6.45'N (Ebonyi State : 2007).

Climatically, the State is semi savanna with seasonal variations of hot and mild cold weather. The vegetation is a missed grill of agrarian forestry and swamp conducive for Rice production that has distinguished the State in the areas of yam and Rice cultivation. Solid minerals that can be found in the State include Lead, Zinc, copper, coal, Lignite, Gypsum, salt, granite, Limestone, crude oil, Kaolin and alluminium. The majority of the people are engaged in subsistence farming that yield staple food crops like yam, cassava, rice, cocoayam and other vegetables that are often marketed due to their large quantity that can not be consumed by the farmer before they perish.(Ebonyi State : 2007)

The Ebonyian is energetic and this pays off in his agricultural endeavours. He is sometimes identified in association with the name of the State capital as "*onye Abakaliki*" meaning (Abakaliki man). The itinerant ones among them go in search of paid manual labour

and farm work beyond the shores of Ebonyi State to other states, where they are engaged on temporary basis, to do work that the natives find tedious.

Ebonyi mans traditional mode of dressing is an over-flowing jumper or long sleeved shirt worn over a George wrapper with a good cap and walking stick to match. The women dress up in a blouse, George or “*abada*” cloth worn up and down with a fitting head tie. Earring and necklace with plaited hair sometimes compliment their fashion.

Ikpor (2013) described Ebonyi culture as one that represents Nigerian character of cultural state pluralism because of the various sub-cultural groups in the state. There are the non Igbo Speaking people of the State, who rather speak Igala and Ori language from Benue and Cross River States, respectively. However, they understand and speak Igbo language, apparently due to their association with other Ebonyi indigenes. Edda people are the sub-cultural group in Ebonyi State that speak an Igbo dialect that resemble that spoken by the old Bende in Abia State, which include Ohafia, Igbere, Item and Abiriba. This sub-cultural group in Ebonyi prepares what some Ebonyi indigenes refer to as Ebonyi most popular soup, *Egburuegbu*. *Esisa soup* is also most popular among the Izzi.

Afikpo also known as Ehugbo, Akpoha, Ibi, Unwana and Amasiri share the same culture and dialect. According to oral tradition, they share a common ancestry and are referred to as Afikpo sub-cultural group, with an addition of Onicha, Ugwulangwu, Isu and Oshiri. The later are found in Ohaozara and Onicha local government areas. Abakaliki sub-cultural group comprises of Ezza, Izzi and Ikwo who share a common ancestry traceable to Ekuma Enyi that produced them from three different wives. Izhia, Ngbo and Agba are believed to have descended from Izzi while Ezzagu, Ezza in Ishielu and Ezza Effium are migrants from Ezza.

Igbo Esaa sub-cultural group that comprises of Nkalagu, Umuhali, Amaso, Obegu and Nkalaha speak a dialect that resembles those of Nkanu and Nsukka in Enugu State. They may have found themselves in Ebonyi State due to the vagaries of border demarcation. Isiagu and Akaeze people in Ivo Local Government Area, speak a dialect that is related to those of Awgu in Enugu State. Remarkably, Apart from the Ori and Igala people of Ebonyi that trace their root to Cross River and Benue States respectively, every other dialect of Ebonyi can be called Igbo and is understood by all.

Akin to every Igbo traditional society, all the sub-cultural groups in Ebonyi State coalesce into a single culture, while responding to their life crises situations, their religion and social order to underscore the homogeneity of the culture. Rites of passage, seasonal or agricultural rites and worship rites are observed in various festivals that are celebrated in Ebonyi State. For instance, virtually all the sub-cultural groups in the State observe the new yam festival, ancestral worship festivals, age grade festivals and marital festivals. *Ojiji* in Edda and Igbeagu, *Iri ji* in Unwana, *Ikeji* in Akpoha, *Eke Okpoto* in Ezza, *Asoji Ikpor Uzo* in Nkalaha, *Iseukwe* in Ngbo among other names given by various communities, all refer to new yam festival that is celebrated in the State. These and other festivals also mark change of season, agricultural activities and farming achievements. *Mbe* in Unwana, Itim and Ohaisu, *Omoha* in Akpoha, *Agbogo obe* in Ozzizza, *Ofuafia* in Ikwo, *Nzu* in Iyionu are festivals that mark initiation ceremonies, wrestling festivals, rites of passage into womanhood respectively. There are other specialised festivals in some communities because of their peculiar ecosystem like *Abu mbe* festival for correction of moral decadence among Edda people, *Odidi* festival in Ishieke for worship to *Odidi* river goddess for abundant water supply and fish, *Okpoko* festival, in honour of Ebonyi River goddess for abundant supply of water and fish.

Their traditional political system is democratic in style, headed by the *Eze* (king) in cabinet. There is also the various traditional institutions responsible for various aspects of the people's socio-cultural life, like the age grades and the title groups often termed as cult groups. The people are industrious and hospitable. They are basically agrarian in nature with a lot of fertile arid land for massive agricultural activities. Afigbo (1981) elucidates that the hard working nature of the people stem from their value for land, which even the thickest bush is owned and has to be farmed. Land has to be transferred to the younger generation through the male line, related by consanguineous procreation. Children therefore are of utmost importance, to ensure that one's land is not lost to the wider kindred. Male children must be born since only males can inherit land from their fathers. The earth deity must be engaged in the farming of the land through rituals in festivals that precede and conclude farming activities. Farming is often ritualized and even harvest is marked with some festivals that are religious.

Until recent times, the Ebonyi person measures success by his exploit in farming activities that requires many hands. These hands can be gained through the increased number of children that are in the family, among other sources of getting labourers. Agricultural activities also heighten the need for children. The state has some rice milling industries scattered in various parts of the state as harvested agricultural products need to be processed.

In some parts of Abakaliki sub-cultural area, apart from the daily markets located in the state capital and a few of the other major cities, there are markets that operate according to their traditional market calendar that comes up at the interval of five days, some of which operate late in the evenings. Their five days market calendar is known as *Ophoke*, *Nkwegu*, *Iboko*, *Onuvu* and *Okpo*. In other sub-cultures of the State, the calendar is four days interval as is obtained in other traditional Igbo calendar, which Ehugbo sub-cultural group call *Eke*, *Orie*, *Aho* and *Nkwo*.

The people attach much importance to their traditional religion as it runs across every aspect of their life. In fact, their world view is religious. They are culturally oriented, stating their strong attachment to culture, Nzam Edeali, (personal communication, 3rd August 2018) argued that it is evidenced in the various festivals and cultural ceremonies that are performed at various seasons of the year in Ebonyi. For instance, according to Chief Nzam Edeali, New yam is not allowed to be imported into the State nor found in the Abakpa main market, the biggest market of the State unless the Ezza clan, which is adjudged the most elderly, performs the new yam festival often carried out in July. Chief Okpaleke (Personal communication, 3rd August, 2018) corroborated this strong attachment to culture among the people, with an account of how an Ezza son was rejected for nomination during the 2015 election into the State House of Assembly by elders of his Clan on the ground that he did not perform the traditional circumcision rites. The strong effect of tradition among the Ebonyians can also be seen in the whole of Igboland and Africa in extension. They are traditionalists with their own fair share of christianisation effect. Hence, they have experienced the trado-religious distortions that saw the emergence of a composite Ebonyi Christian, in recent times.

Their value for children in marriage has not waned in any measure, compared with what is found in other parts of Africa. Egbebu Liberal Movement (2009) captured this during the celebration of their cultural heritage by stating that “the ultimate goal of marriage is procreation. When this is not forth coming, the couple...may resort to consulting native doctors, herbalists and the goddess of fertility for assistance. Infertility is not just a physiological problem but also a spiritual problem that must be solved through rituals. In recent times, Christian families would consult modern doctors, spiritualists and the like” (p.1), for solution.

Implicit in this statement is that child adoption does not enter into the minds of infertile persons at least, not at the onset of seeking solution to childlessness. Rather, all

efforts must be made to ensure that a birth child through consanguineous procreation is realized. The current trend that is informed by modernisation and Christianity is that orthodox medical help could be sought without losing sight of spiritual help and solution which is sought from the Christian purview, as Christians. Christianity that was bequeathed to the Ebonyi people emphasise birth children that is realizable through faith in the procreative and healing power of God. The Ebonyi Christian therefore is inclined to seek solution to his problem of childlessness through the traditional means of resolving infertility which is hinged on polygyny and its likes, against the Christian teaching of monogamy with absolute faith in God for a birth child. The result is that polygamy among the infertile is not a strange sight for some people who do not wish to adopt.

Modernity and globalization have ferried the practice of child adoption into Ebonyi State. The practice has been embraced by some infertile Ebonyi Christians. Yet, it is rejected by many because of the socio – religious resentments informed by the world view of the Igbo. The infertile Ebonyi Christian is therefore in a dilemma of whether to adopt a child, which challenges his faith, or to remain childless where his faith cannot produce a birth child. Both options are equally unfavourable and negate his trado-Christian need for a birth child.

The question therefore that arises is why is he holding on to two opposed religious worldviews which Madu (1997) insist that they strive to stifle each other? The conversion to Christianity that was experienced by the infertile Ebonyi person comes under probe, to explain the composite posture. Hence the study, “the challenges of child adoption; a socio religious discourse of the Ebonyi Christian couple’s experience” serves as a case study of the same experience in the whole of Igboland.

3.1.2. Ebonyi traditional worldview and the challenge of Child Adoption

To the Ebonyi people, there are beings occupying their world, which are not physical or visible. Therefore, the world of the Ebonyi person is both physical and spiritual, with the latter imitating the former, but both are continually interacting. Hence, there is a continuous lineage of the two worlds, but structurally, arranged in a hierarchical order. The continuous interaction of these beings therefore precludes a clear demarcation between the physical and the spiritual. In other words, there is no sacred or profane, nor material or immaterial world, because both world and the beings in them are fused up, but arrayed in an ontological order (Madu, 1997). Ebonyi people's worldview is religious, as the material physical being is as well, spiritual and sacred.

Among the Ebonyi people, the Supreme Being, the deities, the spirit forces, the ancestors and medicine are the ranking, while mortal man, is ranked at the base, to Madu (1997) he must strive to strike a balance to achieve harmony and consequently survive. Madu (1997), Nwoye (2011), and Ekwunife (2016) situated man at the centre of the universe, being a "friend, the beneficiary, the user". He engages the spiritual beings in prayers, sacrifices, libations and ritual gestures to ensure a harmonious interaction, which Metuh (1987) says that these are for "strengthening of the beings involved, and enhances the growth of life (p. 78). These scholars' views represent what is obtained in Ebonyi State.

Man's centrality in the traditional Ebonyi 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" (p.23). 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*” – father lives on, as names given to new born children suggest reincarnated father. To Madu (1997) “childlessness is abhorred and must be guarded against. Childlessness implies extinction of a lineage, which must be resisted by marrying a second wife”(p.7). The cycle of life must not be broken due to childlessness. Life and time, is cyclic and the order must be maintained (Mbiti, 1979).

The arrival of Christianity to Ebonyi State, met with people whom Ugwu (2014) 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.

It was not easy for the missionaries to convert the Ebonyi people on their arrival in 1857, because they dreaded the punishment that may come from their local gods (Okeke, 2017). The alien religion found converts easily, among disillusioned, and socially deprived Igbo like the *Osu*’, parents of twins and social outcasts (Dike, 2009). These found hope in the gospel that preached equality of rights and opportunities to everyone. Again the hospitable nature of the Ebonyi people contributed to their ceding of land to the missionaries to build churches (Anyika, 2010). To deal with the traditional gods of the Ebonyi people that was strong in the mind of adult natives, hindering them from receiving the gospel, the

missionaries targeted to start conversion with the children by introducing western education (Ibenwa, 2014). 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” (p34), resulting according to Ekwunife (2016) to confusion, individualism, selfishness, bitterness and so on. This was achieved through the establishment of village church-school teachers who targeted the youths that were not deep rooted in their traditional religious convictions (Ifemesia, 1972).

Ekwunife (2016) wondered if mass conversion as executed by the missionaries in Igboland was conversion “to book learning, and the elusive monetary/white collar Jobs or adherence to the message of Christ” (p.35). Ibenwa (2014) described this as cultural baggage of education and urbanization which the missionaries used to entice the Igbo. Even the conversion of the disenchanted social outcasts and traditionally “deprived and discriminated” Ebonyi person was not necessarily that they were convinced and truly converted to the Christian God but saw this as a means of escaping their social torment (Okeke *et al*, 2017). Ibenwa (2014) shared this view pointing out that it did not take long after conversion before they resorted to their traditional practices. Having embraced Christianity, they deviated to form the syncretistic brand of Christianity that reflected Igbo traditional practices, as opposed to what Ekwunife (2016) described as “the unalloyed message of Jesus Christ inside a thick layer of foreign culture and dogmatically, ideologically coupled with political and economic forces, presenting it to Africans as the ideal faith” (p. 35).

The outcome of this experience is chaotic and perhaps still remains so till date as illustrated by Ekwunife (2016) with the proverbial bat, *Usu* which is neither a mammal nor bird, which imping that they are neither at home with the faith as encapsulated in the alien cultural mold, nor with their traditional religion and culture. Agwaraonye (2017) maintains that till today, the Igbo Christian which also includes the Ebonyi Christian “unconsciously

respond to the demands of these forces which has led to a disorientation and distortion of worldviews ... and often left (them) disillusioned” (p.48).

Polygyny as a means of redressing childlessness and infertility in marriage among Africans did not escape the hammer of the evangelizers, who branded it ‘sin’ as opposed to its multiple utilitarian ends (Ibenwa, 2014). Added to its benefits is the fact that it serves as a social justice system that provides husband for all the women (Okadigbo, 1979, Ibenwa, 2014). The Ebonyi Christians who were disillusioned with the “aggression” of Christianity to the Ebonyi traditional religion, resorted to establishing the Independent African Churches, some of which ratified polygyny (Ndiokwere 1980). Some who remained in the orthodox mission churches namely the Church Missionary Society and the Roman Catholic Church also became syncretistic as Leith Ross, as cited in Ibenwa (2014), observed that the Ebonyi 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 time; avowed Ebonyi Christians can deviate to practice polygyny in 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 Ebonyi people 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 worldview against Ebonyi people’s belief in reincarnation (Madu, 1997).

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 Nwanunobi as cited in Ekwunife (2016), biological fatherhood without societal approval obtained through payment of appropriate bride wealth and performance of customary rituals, does not approve of social fatherhood. A genitor, that is a biological father who did not meet the societal requirements for marriage cannot claim a child, according to Ebonyi tradition. Yet the child will still trace his biological father and go back to him when he is denied inheritance in his maternal home.

A brand of Christianity, noticeable among the Ebonyi people, that emerged from the mainline missionary churches have been termed New Religious Movements by Madu (2003). He further delineated this trend into the healing churches, the thaumaturgical group and the evangelical or Pentecostal group, all with one common feature as a blend or hybrid of both missionary Christianity and Igbo traditional religion, nay very syncretic indeed. Their syncretism stem from their mode of worship that incorporate African traditional modes of worship like vibrant dancing, clapping of hands, and ecstatic prayers. Even beliefs that incorporate Ebonyi traditional beliefs like the need for continued life or existence beyond death as contained in the belief in reincarnation as opposed to Christian doctrine of eternity after death is syncretic. The healing churches and the thaumaturgical magical movement share a common feature that is hinged on Igbo worldview. According to Madu (2003), religion permeates everything that the Igbo engage in, including seeking solution to childlessness and infertility. Added to this is the notion that “nothing happens for nothing” (p.5). Infertility and childlessness are not restricted to natural or scientific causes. The Ebonyi person 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 carried out.

Psycho-somatic and psychic approach to realise 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. Psycho-somatic matters or illnesses relates to sicknesses that are caused by the mental factors such as stress. It is a health situation involving the body and the mind which requires cure of the mind to achieve physical cure. Psychic deals with activities outside the sphere of scientific knowledge. It is a claim or belief to possess' sensitivity or knowledge of extra sensory or supernatural forces and their control. Madu (2003) noted prayers and recommendation of the hosting of a lavish party for children, special sacrifices to God that must be preceded by confession of sins, as a common prescription for realisation of a child, by a childless woman. These are rooted in Ebonyi traditional religious worldview of cause and effect.

The evangelicals/Pentecostals occupy a unique place in Christianity among Ebonyi people because of their critical posture towards other groups of Christians. Madu (2003) described them as itinerant, always preaching and stressing holiness and ever ready to confront enemies. The researcher perceives them as the "fervent" group that Fisher as cited in Metuh (1987) located in the stages of conversion. Their use of local instruments like drums, gongs, clapping of hands, vibrant singing and dancing as Ndiokwere (1980) listed their qualities, can be interpreted as inculturation, if the word according to Wikitionary (2017) means "the adaptation of Christian teachings in a non-Christian culture. The liturgies of the western Christian tradition could be said to have been adapted by these Pentecostals, to Ebonyi culture.

The peculiar posture of the evangelicals 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 the 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, prayer and fasting with faith in a loving and caring father, God (Madu; 2003, Heb 11: 1-3, Math 7:7-11).

Ironically, the romance between this group of Christians and Western exotic theologies, have only been consummated in their strict adherence to monogamy against Ebonyi traditional religions stance of polygyny. The western import of child adoption that came on the heels of western global influence, have not found a place among the Pentecostal as they are reluctant to embark on it, at the face of childlessness and infertility. The reasons adduced, is ardent faith in God for a birth child, which cannot be compromised by doubt because nobody with doubt can receive anything from God (James 1; 5-7). 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. The dilemma experienced among Ebonyi state Christians is most profound here as the Christianity practised among Ebonyi Christians, forbids the traditional solution to childlessness as contained in the Ebonyi worldview, polygyny. It rather conveys faith in God for a birth child as experienced by some bible characters such as Abraham and sarah, Hannah and Elkanah, Zachariah and Elizabeth so on. More so, it lacks an emphatic gospel but rather of metaphorisms, in favour of child adoption as a basis for Christians who fall short of faith requirements and consequently unable to realise their birth child, to adopt.

On the other hand, as Christians, applying Ebonyi traditional religion and engaging in polygyny, 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. Advanced age of a woman often portend the imminent attainment of menopause. This means a cessation of menstruation and cessation of the possibility of natural motherhood in a woman’s life (Hornby, 2011). Advanced age also implicates the legal demand for adoption, which is maximum 45 years for a woman who has

not had a child at all (Ojelabi, 2015). Perpetual waiting in demonstration of faith diminishes the woman's qualification chances for adoption and heightens anxiety.

Further, the perennial waiting process, to achieve an adopted child through institutionalised agency and its frustrating demands, makes it more preferable to adopt through the "baby factories", However, the risk of being branded a child trafficker makes the option unattractive, as operators and patronizers of such arrangement are perpetually being hunted by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigerian Police, other government and security agencies.

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 Ebonyi 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 Ebonyi Christian is sin. Deliberately involving himself in a sinful venture for the desire of a child that will be adopted makes nonsense of his profession of the Christian faith. Yet he is in need of a birth child or perhaps a particular gender.

In the midst of this quagmire, not knowing which option to pursue, some Ebonyi State Christians can only be said to be in a dilemma originating from their innermost traditional religious convictions and the opposed posture of their new Christian background, social realities of adoption that frustrate agency adoption such as high cost bribery and stigmatisation, the legality and morality of adopting from baby factory and so on. Yet, he is deemed to have been converted to Christianity. There is need therefore to ask what really is conversion and what nature of conversion did the Igbo Christian experience that prompted

the retention of two seemingly opposing world views, since they are adjudged mutually hostile (Madu, 1997).

3.2. The Practice of Child Adoption in Ebonyi State.

3.2.1 The Prevalence and causes of Child Adoption in Ebonyi State.

Agbo (2014) and Nwaoga (2013) acknowledged that child adoption is known and practiced in Ebonyi State. However, social and religious factors discourage people from adopting. Even stigmatisation which is suffered by the adoption triad has not completely stopped people from adopting at the face of the desperation for a child. However, ways of checking stigmatisation is sought through false pregnancy, by the infertile person as they prepare to adopt. Such fake pregnancy is terminated when a child to be adopted is readily available, with the pretext that a birth or biological child is born. Also adoptive parents are often ready to confront any individual who is aware and wishes to disclose the adopted status of the adoptee. According to Mrs Amaka Ononye, (Personal communication, 6th August, 2018), it amounts to poke nosing which she will take up in a court of law, if somebody should tell her adopted twins that they are not her children. Some of the reasons why people adopt children include the following;

Firstly, the death of head of the family without an heir to carry on the name of the family is one of the reasons why people embark on child adoption in the Ebonyi State. A man is the head of the family. Consequently, the wife may decide to adopt a child if she has past the age of child bearing, to secure her place in the family and provide an heir for the family. The researcher witnessed the case of Mrs Arnold Atu, who adopted a child even against the wish of her brothers' in-law and took them to court just to secure her husband's property that was to be shared.

Secondly, infertility is the major reason why a couple will consider adopting a child. Ebonyi State culture requires that a couple should produce their biological child. However, where the couple cannot produce a child due to primary infertility or secondary infertility, they may opt to adopt an heir or the particular sex of the child they are lacking.

Thirdly, Christian background is also a reason why some Ebonyi State Christians will prefer to adopt rather than take to polygamy, surrogate, levirate or sorrorate arrangements to get a child. Christianity preaches against sex with a person that is not a marriage partner. Therefore, the infertile Ebonyi Christian couple is left with no other option than to adopt.

Fourthly, Philanthropy which is the desire to improve the material, social and spiritual wellbeing of humanity through charitable works, is another reason why people adopt. Some people would want to be called “*omere oha*” meaning literally, “doer for all”, and consequently go out of their way to adopt. In Igboland, philanthropy could earn somebody a traditional chieftaincy title.

Finally, Companionship at old age is another reason why some people adopt. Mr George Ifezue (personal communication, 6th August, 2018) informed the researcher that the major reason why he adopted his last daughter as his wife who already gave him two daughters, a son, and is aged, desired a companion. According to him, all his biological children were grown up and settled in their various homes. Hence he needed a child not only to run errands in the home but to keep them company, as one of the challenges of old age is loneliness.

3.2.2 Child Adoption among adherents of Traditional Religion in Ebonyi State.

Child adoption is the official transfer through the legal system, of all the parental rights that a biological parent has, to a child of other biological parenthood, including the

responsibility for the care of a biological child, with its corresponding duties, responsibility, filiation and care of the biological child towards his adoptive parents (Eke *et al*, 2014).

In conformity with the Roman legal culture, child adoption is not known in the pristine traditional Ebonyi society; as infertility and childlessness management option in marriage (Nwaoga, 2013). Rather, Mbiti (1969) noted that alternative arrangements for begetting children, which include polygyny, surrogate, sororate and levirate cultural practices are employed to get children in Ebonyi State. Among the Igbo people, “*omenala* or *omenani*” encapsulates the socio-religious laws, customs and traditions passing from generation to generation and having its origin as far back as the time of the ancestors (Ike & Edozien 2001). It is not only how the people perceive reality, but also their response to it and the world around them. Literally, the word *Ome-na-ala*, is a compound word that is derived from “*ome*”, meaning “as it is done or as it obtains”. “*na*” is a preposition meaning “in or and”. “*Ala* or *ani*” means “Land, ground or earth” The word *omenani* therefore means that which obtains in the land or as it is done in the land (Ike & Edozien, 2001). Ebonyi people believe that *Omenani* is linked with the “*Ala*” Earth spirit who received laws from “Chukwu” God, and passed it on through generations through the ancestors who are the custodians of such traditions (Ifesieh, 1989, Arinze, 1970 & Anyanwu, 1999). Ike & Edozien (2001) described *omenani* as “experiences, laws, customs, world view, moral, history and philosophy” that the ancestors handed over by word of mouth from generations to generation (p.59). It can therefore be regarded as the expression of the Ebonyi people’s worldview, which accommodates their religion.

Child adoption is a mechanism for maintaining social harmony between a child, the adoptive parents, the society at large and even the ancestors whom he engages in worship. The adoptive parents are cared for at old age as the child is cared and nurtured into a

beneficial member of the society. The society is saved the pains from the menace of unwanted and disoriented children.

According to Ojelabi *et al* (2015) child adoption practice vary across Nigeria. In Ebonyi state, inheritance that empowers entitlement to resources flows from the father-figure (Nwaoga, 2013.) As a patrilineal society, descent that is traceable through blood relationship, guides adoption. This underscores the only known traditional form of adoption practiced among the Ebonyi people of the pristine era, called kinship adoption. According to Agbo (2014), a child who loses both parents or whose parents are too poor or too sick to raise him, can be adopted by a kin, like the grandparents, uncles, aunts, or even any close relation. Ojelabi *et al* (2015) avers that this was regarded as mutual agreement, placement or accommodation of children in homes of relations with the understanding that they were being adopted. But to him, because there was no statutory basis for this act, it is not legal adoption and as such, such parents are often regarded as guardians or foster parents. This implies that children can be reclaimed by their biological parents, relations or kin, to bear the names of their biological parents.

Forsterhood or guardianship and kinship adoption have lingered in Ebonyi State until recent times. However, Eke *et al* (2014) argue that in recent times, child adoption as imported from the western world has been gaining increasing interest of couples as infertility and childlessness management option. According to Oladokun *et al* (2009), the fear of annihilation by both immediate families and the community at large, among other social, psychological, religious and health reasons, have prompted Ebonyi people to engage in child adoption. Yet to natives, adopting an unknown child in Ebonyi State is generally not acceptable because of so many fears .

Another apparent type of child adoption is found in the marriage of a teenager who gives birth to a child in her parent's house. In some parts of Ebonyi like Ezza, Izzi, Ikwo, Ohaukwu and Ivo, when a young girl gives birth to children out of wedlock, effort is made to quickly marry her out. Often, eligible suitors that are found for such a girl are persons that are experiencing infertility or aged men who desire companionship but rarely young healthy suitors. When such girls are married, they go into their new matrimonial homes with all the children born in their father's house, thereby transferring the fatherhood of these children to their new husband who is not related to the children by blood. The new father can therefore be regarded as an adoptive father since he is not related to the children by blood, but assumes the role a biological father. However, in the South of Ebonyi, under the same circumstance as narrated above, the children are usually sent back to their biological father, even if he did not marry the woman. Sunday Eme, (Personal communication, 5th April, 2018) insists that nobody in that area would tolerate a strange blood in form of such children in his family.

According to Pastor Ebenezer Ogechukwu 43, (personal communication, 5th April 2018) *Ogbo* in Ohaukwu can metamorphose into child adoption. *Ogbo* is a child who is given the name of an uncle, friend or relation in reciprocation of favours received in the past or for strengthening of ties. Where the uncle or relation fails to achieve a surviving male child to inherit from him, the *Ogbo* automatically steps in to play the role of a child by caring for him and on his demise, inherits all that belongs to the uncle. *Ogbo* practice can also be found in some other parts of Ebonyi like Izzi and Ikwo.

3.2.3. Child Adoption among Christians in Ebonyi State

Christianity is described as the worship and access to God through Jesus Christ. Its "constitution" is the law of Christ as contained in the new testament of the bible (Madu, 1997). It is worthy of note that at the infancy stage of Christianity, because of its historical

background, Madu (1997) pointed out that “It picked up the torch of civilization, cherished all that was good in Greek and Roman culture and changed the entire moral character of the ancient world” (p.125). This perhaps explains the similarity and use of child adoption principles as found in Ancient Rome and Greece (UN, 2007). Child adoption was used metaphorically in the new testament to emphasise the permanence of man’s relationship with God, rights of Gods children and Christ’s redemptive act (MacDougall, 2009).

More (2009) sees adoption as a culture in Christianity that presses for the great commission mandate which joins Christ in advocating for the helpless and abandoned. Children abandoned on the streets needing help. Christianity preaches on the sanctity of human life which should be preserved rather than abortion. Such lives also must be helped further through adoption.

Jesus’ example of adopting John in John 19:26-27, is regarded as an example worth emulating. To Moore (2009), John was not Jesus brother but he shared a mother with him. Jesus was deemed to have adopted John into his family at the cross, mandating him to perform the role of a son to a mother in distress by caring for her.

Child adoption among Christians demands that the believer should love what God loves. God loves children. Jesus qualified candidates to enter into the kingdom of heaven when they are like children (Math. 18:5-6). Serving a child through adoption is therefore serving God. Specifically, God loves and cares for orphans as exemplified in James 1:27. Jesus expressed empathy and tenderness towards pregnant and nursing mothers while describing the horror of fleeing to the mountains to hide (Matth. 24:19). God loves the barren woman (Luke 1:7). God loves families and uses it as a picture of mans relationship with him, according to Ephesians 3: 14-15. MacDougal (2009) tells us that human families reflect an eternal father hood.

Adoption in Christianity is also equated with the covenant rather than an ordinary promise. It goes beyond a legal process but a bond between man and the divine, when Paul says in Ephesians that “we are chosen before the foundation of the world, to be adopted” (MacDougal 2009, 70).

Jesus who is God, Himself, gave an example of adoption by yielding to be brought up by an adoptive father. Moore (2009) and MacDougal (2009) argue that Jesus was not related by D.N.A or genetically with Joseph, because Joseph’s sperm was not responsible for his conception. Some scholarly opinion drive home this position by stressing that tracing the lineage of Jesus to David can only mean that Joseph’s paternity of Jesus is accounted for, by adoption, not by natural or sexual conception. Joseph is called a son of David.

Adoption is a scriptural metaphor that guarantees the legal entitlement of believers as heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). Adoption into the Christian faith is likened to child adoption which unites persons not related by blood; in Christ to share a common family name (*Pater familias*), children of God. Consequently they are all heirs apparent (*sui heredes*) and joint heirs with Christ. Paul therefore employed the “*adoptio sensu strictu*” of the Roman culture to portray the image of salvific work of Christ to mankind (Stibbe, 2005). This alludes to approval of the practice.

Among Igbo of contemporary times, Christianity is fragmented within denominational bounds. Child adoption seems to be favourably disposed to, by members of the mission or mainline churches because of their affiliation and allegiance to the authority of the church in Europe, America and the Western World, where child adoption apparently originated. The philosophy behind child adoption is secularization (Madu, 2003). Secularization as an epochal change took place in the west (Chadwick, 1975). It is therefore not difficult for Catholics in Ebonyi and generally Igboland, whose church historical background is traceable

to the West, to adopt. The Catholic Church, in her Catechisms of the Catholic Church (C.C.C.) part three, article six, and number 2378 recognises and respects a child as a person from the moment of his conception. Number 2379 states that “physical sterility is not an absolute evil” and legitimate medical solution can be sought. It further recommended that spouses who still suffer from infertility after all efforts at finding solution should, “give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children” (p.171).

The Pentecostals and the Evangelicals in the mission churches like the Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion (EFAC) and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal derive their names from the apostles’ experience on the day of Pentecost that is evident by the descent of the Holy Spirit. Faith in the healing power of the Holy Spirit, is one of the attributes of the Pentecostals (Ndiokwere, 1994). Consequently, infertility is regarded as a condition which God can remedy, through faith against child adoption. In Madu’s (2003) view, theological and moral issues like polygamy which is the Igbo’s antidote to childlessness, has persisted in some new religious movements. Enduring African community consciousness and polytheism therefore do not constitute “qualms of conscience in practicing both Christianity and traditional religion” (p.11), to the Ebonyi Christian. Among such Christians, child adoption therefore is not easily accepted.

The teachings of Christianity are imbued in doctrines held by Christianity and its various denominations that are noticeable in Ebonyi State. These teachings can be found in Christian theology that is held uniformly by the various denominations, indicative of the oneness of the faith.

Christian theology is the study of Christian beliefs and practices based on the text of the old and New Testament of the holy bible, as well as on Christian tradition. Exegesis, which is a critical explanation or interpretation of a religious text, rational analysis and

argument are the skills involved in the study. Christian theology among other disciplines, include biblical studies, which is interpretation of the bible with emphasis on historical-critical investigation, Dogmatic theology which is studying “dogma,” that which is thought to be good, as an official system of principles or tenets of a church (Harper, 2017). Also employed in this study is spiritual theology that may be called orthopraxy, which is simply, correct conduct ethically and liturgically as opposed to orthodoxy which emphasises correct belief and ritualism. Orthopraxy focuses more on cultural integrity, concerns of purity, ethics, sacrificial offerings, spirits, breath and life (Stringer, 1999). This study revolved around Christology which considered the natures of Jesus Christ in relation with His divinity and humanity, soteriology that deals with the nature and means of salvation and pneumatology which deals with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ humanity lends support to the argument of some scholars that he was an adopted son of Joseph, thereby tracing his paternity to Joseph and David. However, his divinity challenges this position as held by the Catechism of the Catholic Church (C.C.C.) numbers 2673, 2717, 2745, 2766, 2740. The C.C.C. insists that Jesus is the son of God and shares equal status with God and the Holy Spirit in divinity and therefore not an adopted son of any man.

Ajulo (2017) in a study outline, described adoption as an action whereby a man takes another person into his family, in order to make him a part of it, acknowledges him for his son, and receives him into the number and gives him a right to the privilege of his children. The adoptive parents acquire the local power over the adopted child exactly as if it were the issue of his own body; while the later enjoys in his new family, the same rights as if he had been born into it. Old testament instances of adoption can be found in Ex. 2; 10, where Moses was adopted as the son of Pharaohs daughter. In Gen. 15; 2, Abraham proposed to Jehovah due to his childlessness, to adopt his worthy steward, Eliezer of Damascus as his son

and heir. However, this proposal was turned down by Jehovah who insisted in Gen. 15; 4 that a son coming “from his loins” will be his heir (p.10). Hence, Jehovah can apparently be said to emphasise consanguineous procreation.

This extols the preferred choice of consanguineous procreation against adoption, thereby placing adoption as an inferior means of begetting children. In Esther 2: 7, Queen Esther became the adopted child of Mordecai.

The New Testament teaching on Adoption holds that when an individual is born again by the spirit of God, he becomes a “child of God” and by this act, is admitted into the family of God, with filial joy to God the father. To Ajulo (2017) adoption is a change of position whereby the sinner is moved into the family of God and receives the position of an heir as cited in Romans 8:17, of an adult son; he becomes an adult. (Gal. 4: 5-7). In adoption, the “child” of God now grows up to assume the place of an adult son, leaving babyhood stage to claim his rights and privileged as an adult son, with the responsibility of his status.

Adoption in the Epistles therefore can only be understood in the spiritual sense, where the sinner who is an alien to God is brought into the family of God through transaction of salvation. Adoption is an act of pure grace; where God sealed the transaction with the blood of His own son, as price or consideration paid for the adoption (Eph. 2: 12-13). Faith in the finished work of Christ is the condition on which the erstwhile sinner or alien is brought into the privileged of adoption (Gal. 3: 26). God on the hand resolved to adopt man in to His family based on grace which is unmerited favour. (Eph. 2: 8).

Omeire (2016) argues that physical or natural resemblance is not tenable, between an adopter and adoptee. Natural features are determined by genetics, which manifest in physical features such as complexion, height, and so on. It also shows through physiological and behavioural dispositions. Ajulo (2017) agrees with this position by stating that in natural

adoption, the disposition, facial or natural characteristics of an adopter cannot be transferred to the adoptee. But in the spiritual sense of adoption, the adoptee, through the process of regeneration becomes a partaker of divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 4). This resemblance however, is not physical but in spiritual qualities. The adoptive parents owe some privileges and responsibilities of Adoption to the Adoptee, some of which are, they become objects of Gods peculiar love. Jn. 17: 23, they become objects of divine fatherly care. Lk 12: 27 – 33, they have deliverance from a servile spirit, from slavish fear of God. Rom. 8: 16, they are heirs in relation to God. Rom. 8:17, they have leadership of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8: 14, they receive fatherly correction. Heb. 12: 5- 11, they receive fatherly comfort. 2 Corinth. 1: 4, they receive divine probation from evil. Lk. 10: 19, they have family love Jn 13: 34 and they have inheritance of future glory. 1 Pet. 1: 3 – 4.

The responsibility of the adoptee who is the believer is to extol and magnify God's mercy and live for His pleasure. He is to work in high honour befitting of his position as Gods heir, without disgracing his family's good name, being led by the Holy Spirit. (Colosians 1:10 & 1 Pet. 2: 9 – 10)

Cruver (2011) applied the adoption principles as found in the Epistles, which deals on the spiritual adoption of Christians from races outside of the Jewish race into the family of God, in favour of child adoption. He seemed to have drawn the urgency of his argument from the staggering figure of 143 million orphaned and vulnerable children which sub Saharan Africa contributed approximately 47.5 million, (Cruver, 2011). This represents the size of one of the most populous countries of the world.

Cruver (2011) identified vertical and horizontal adoption which he traced to the relationship between man and God, in Christianity. To him, God is the originator of child adoption because even before man came into existence, God by His omniscient quality knew

that the world will evolve in history to become what it is today. Mans earliest practice of child adoption was only a prompting of Divine design for the salvation of man before the foundation of the world. Salvation was first, God, coming or reaching out to man in grace leading to a vertical relationship. Christianity's horizontal relation of movement from man to man is manifest in "Love your neighbour as yourself". Both inter-relationships concurrently portray the message of Christianity. Love between God and man is vertical, as we love God because He first loved us" as in 1 John 4: 19. Horizontal love between man and his fellow is sequel to vertical love. Christians were also commanded to welcome or receive fellow Christians as in Romans 15: 7, a horizontal relationship hinged on a vertical relationship of common salvation among Christians. Loving children and giving expression to it by adopting them, can be equated to loving horizontally.

Ephesian 1: 5 hold that all have been predestined to be adopted, as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. By this passage, Cruver (2011) infers that God is the originator of adoption, from whom man learnt the practice of child adoption. Again, man should love fellow man by extending adoption to the vulnerable children and let them know that they are adopted as Christ explicitly made us to understand that we are His adopted children (Ephesians 2: 11-14). By this, the believer in Christ, owe it as a duty to ensure that more persons are adopted into the family of Christ. As a demonstration of the vertical and horizontal relationship of the Christian with his saviour, orphaned and vulnerable children should share in this act of adoption through child adoption.

Spiritual adoption therefore, is the thrust of adoption in the Epistles, which is beyond the scope of this work. The criterion for inclusion into this study intrinsically is physical infertility which only occurs in the natural, physiological state of man. The New Testament did not at any point discuss man's hope at the face of infertility, with respect to adoption. Instead the bible insists that there is nothing impossible with God, being an Omnipotent God

(Luke 1: 37). Gal. 4: 27 states that eventually, the barren or infertile shall have more children than the fruitful (Psalm 113; 9). Even at an old age of both male and female, the New Testament propagates an unrelenting faith in God's ability to give children as exemplified in the case of Zacharia and Elizabeth, who bore John the Baptist at old age. This position portends that Christianity, through the New Testament text, is insisting on faith in God for a biological child, without provision for child adoption. In other words, consanguinity is Christianity's advocacy, when related with other Judeo-Christian texts that narrated experiences on levirate, surrogate and polygamist arrangements that sought to resolve childlessness or infertility (Gen. 16: 1 – 4, Gen. 38: 6 -9, Gen. 29: 22-28).

This tenacious faith in God for a biological child, without recourse to old age, surrogate, levirate or polygamist marriage, which is akin to the practice in Igbo traditional religion, is the source of controversy in the mind of the infertile Igbo Christians, who are waiting in demonstration of faith, even as her age is fast drifting towards menopause. Christianity as preached in the Christian churches does not permit those alternative measures for a birth child. The Christian bible has also no emphatic message of child adoption as a panacea for infertility. Apparently, such a message would have casted doubt on the unlimited power of God to do all things, which in this case, is to give birth or biological children to Christians who love, obey and follow the ways of God in "spirit and in truth" (Jn 4: 24).

These hazy options, with which the Igbo Christian is left with, experiencing obvious intractable infertility, put him in a dilemma situation. Yet as Igbo persons, the world view of the Igbo that forms his germane socio-religious value, which insists that he must have children that must include the male sex, demand that he must not leave the matter to fate but "action" to forestall the negative consequences. Such world view and consequences come in opposition to the world view of Christianity, which Madu (1997) observed that world views try to stifle each other. Igbo Christians among who are preachers, who sometime experience

infertility; have been observed to experience dilemma of which option to take to achieve birth children, without support or inclination towards child adoption.

As a fallout from the dilemma experienced by Igbo Christians, another worry that an observer may have, is why is the Christian who is believed to have been converted from traditional religion, still holding on to the values of the Igbo traditional religion, if conversion is what Fisher in Metuh (1987) described as a total turnaround from the former convictions to a new faith. One therefore begins to wonder if there are half ways to conversion, or whether it was not conversion that took place but adherence or rather that this is a stage in conversion cycle as theorised by Fisher in Metuh (1987).

3. 2.4. Types of Child Adoption.

The decision to adopt children by an infertile or childless couple is determined by various factors such as cost, secrecy of the source of adoption aimed at obscuring the source to avoid the chances of the child's return to his or her biological parents, stigmatization and so on. Legality of an adoption is also enhanced by the source of adoption. Knowledge of the source of adoption will resolve some of these issues that are raised. The type of child adoption that a couple wishes to embark upon, will also resolve these issues and guide them on how to go about it.

(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 popular in Ebonyi State because the Ebonyi insistence on autochthony means that where the adopted child can be reached by his or her biological parents, there is room for reclamation especially where the biological parents fail to bear children or the gender of the child that was given away in adoption. Mrs Patricia Abuchi, (Personal communication, 14th October, 2017), corroborated this view as

she narrated to the researcher how her boy friend who denied paternity of her baby during her teen age, came back to reclaim the child after he failed to bear his own children with his wife. She wondered what the situation would have been if she had given the child out in adoption and had contact with the adoptive parents. To her it would have been a disaster for the adoptive parents. However Okodo I. (2018), on implications of adopting an *Osu* suggest that such exchange of contacts presupposes that there is fair knowledge of the adoptees biological background that will enable the adoptive parents to avoid falling victim of adopting an *Osu*.

(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 procedure, to give legal backing to the adoption (Nwaoga, 2013). Child adoption through the baby factory that is common among the people of Ebonyi State is done by close adoption because no adoptive parent would like to risk the loss of an adopted child to the biological parents after taking care of the child over many years, with the adoptive parents far advanced in age. Especially for males, adoptive children are most likely to return to their biological parents whenever they discover that they were adopted. Within the limit of adoption as conveyed by law, this type of adoption has little or no disadvantage.

(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). This type of adoption eliminates the problem of racial differences as the race of the adoptee and that of the adoptive parents is the same. It also enhances adoption

as the laws of the country will be mutually known by the adoptive parents and the birth mother of the adoptee. Consequently, obtaining an Adoption Order will be less difficult. This type of adoption however deprives adoptive children of the opportunity of being adopted by person outside of their birth country where they could be given a better life and upbringing. Also it frustrates the desire of philanthropists who may wish to adopt from a particular country with the intention of contributing to the enhancement of lives of the natives. Nigerian laws permits only domestic adoption.

(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. This has been variably termed as trans-racial adoption or interracial adoption, where both biological and adoptive parents are of different races (Zhang, 2006). This type of adoption promotes philanthropy as foreigners can adopt children from another country that may have indigent citizens. Unfortunately, this type of adoption has favoured some criminal acts like prostitution and human trafficking because, the moment the adopted child is taken out of his or her local domain, he or she depends solely on the mercy and magnanimity of the adoptive parents. Where the adoptive parents are criminal, the laws of the adoptive parent's home country may not be able to protect the child especially where the immigration is not documented for monitoring. Forced labour, child prostitution and ritual killings, have sometimes featured in international adoption.

(v) **Foster Care Adoption:** This is adoption of children in State care, for the safety of the children 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 another dimension of foster care, where legal procedures were not followed, and children from such homes are given out but often regarded as foster parents or guardians. This type of adoption is known and practiced among

traditional Ebonyi people. The disadvantage in this type of child adoption is that it frustrates the goal of adoption where the child will always return to his or her biological parents and bear their name rather than bearing the adoptive parents name. This type of adoption falls short of adoption as contained in the constitution of the country.

(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 is beneficial as it salvages the name of a childless deceased person and ensures that the notion of “*Afamefula*” (may my name not be lost) as valued by the traditional Ebonyi Christian, is upheld. However it has generated controversies in some families because it is expected that the person would have given consent that a child should be adopted for him in case of his demise. Otherwise, the family of the person will regard the adoption effort as a ploy to deprive them of the liberty and opportunity to reclaim and share the property of the deceased person by mostly his widow. This was the suspicion of the brother in law of Mrs Arnold Atu that prompted them to drag her to court over her late husband’s property despite the fact that she has adopted a male child to carry on the name of her late husband.

(vii) **Kinship Adoption:** This adoption, originates from the extended family system. It is largely informal but involves mutually agreed placement of children in homes of relatives. Kinship adoption is relatively similar with fostering. It is not illegal (Ojelabi *et al*, 2015). This type falls short of Child Adoption as obtained within the law, because despite caring for the child’s upbringing, the child is at liberty to go back to his or her biological parents.

(viii) **Private Adoption:** This is adoption arranged through an individual, like a physician, clergy, an attorney or even a referral service. This is popular in Ebonyi State and recently has been abused and exploited for financial gain as young girls are employed to get pregnant and give birth to babies that are given out to childless couples at exorbitant cost,

hence tending to “baby factory” activity. Private adoption is easy to be arranged as many interest parties are not involved in the process thereby making the process less cumbersome and rigorous. Sometimes the closeness and intimacy between the adoptive parents and the agent who arranges for the adoption makes it an open adoption where the two parties exchange contact and the adoptive parents can be reached in case of litigation and reclamation of the child. It also exposes the adoptee which is the child to the hazard of being adopted by ritualists and criminals as the interest of the agent is basically the profit accruable from the transaction. A scrutiny of the adoptive parents status is not conducted thereby leaving room for criminals to engage in their trade successfully.

- (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. This is the type of adoption that the law permits as the bureaucratic process involved protects the interest of the Child as well as that of the adoptive parents. This type of adoption is same as legal adoption and is riddled with a long bureaucratic process that sometimes is not known by persons who have need to adopt, thereby discouraging child adoption in Ebonyi State.
- (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. In various States, there are government agencies that are saddled with the task of managing adoption matters, which is rarely uniform in all the states. It is done in collaboration with the court registrar, with laid down rules guiding the process.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHILD ADOPTION

4. Legal View of Child Adoption in Nigeria

Child adoption is a social issue that derives its authenticity from the laws of the State or nation. In Nigeria, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the source of authority or power for any act. The members of the Senate make laws as the upper legislative chamber and the Federal House of Representatives legislate as the lower chamber at the Federal level. Both are jointly referred to as the National Assembly. The states also maintain a single house known as the House of Assembly. The National Assembly made the 2003 Childs Right Act on child adoption.

4.1 2003 Childs Right Act on Child Adoption in Nigeria

The Child Rights Act 2003 enacted by the National Assembly became effective on 31st July 2003. Part XII of the Act dwelt on the regulation of Adoption throughout Nigeria. However, the adoption, rights and welfare of children are matters within the legislative competence of the State Houses of Assembly, under the 1999 constitution. State legislations therefore subsist, thereby making the 2003 act enforceable in the Federal capital Territory Abuja where the National Assembly has the power to make laws (Chukwu, 2012).

According to Chukwu (2012), States in the Northern part of Nigeria have not given attention to adoption because of their Islamic stance which does not support it. Instead, *Kafallah* which is a child welfare scheme, for taking care of a child in Islam, without expecting the child to bear the guardians name, expect to receive inheritance from him and devoid of consanguinity which permits sexual relationship is practiced. Nigeria is a secular state and some residents in the North are not all Moslems. Even in Islamic nations like Tunisia and Somalia, adoption legislation abound. Therefore, the abeyance of this act or any

other act on adoption that can originate from the various houses of Assembly in the North, amount to denying non-Moslems and even Moslems who would want to benefit from the practice both as unparented children who loiter the streets and potential adoptive parents, the benefits accruing from child Adoption (Ibraheem, 2013).

Section 274 of the Act provides that any other enactment that is inconsistent with this Act on same subject matter, renders such alternate act void. Consequently enactments against adoption from any of the Northern States should be regarded as void. Instead the Act should be invoked.

Section 141 subsection 1a described adoption law as; all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities in other legislative Act under the personal law applicable to the parents of the child or any other person in relation to the future custody, maintenance, supervision and education of the child, including all religious rights, rights to appoint a guardian and to consent or give notice of dissent to marriage, being extinguished. Subsection 1b vests all these powers on the adopter of the child, as if the child were a natural birth child, with right of inheritance like a natural child.

Section 125 of the Act demands that each State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory should establish and maintain a facility for taking care of children that might need to be adopted. In exceptional cases, such facilities should also care for the mother of a child and for the management of adoption cases which includes counseling of prospective adopters. Establishment of such facilities across the states will not only foster synergy, uniformity and ease of adoption process, but will also enhance the information base or awareness of the populace about the practice of adoption. In Igboland, or South Eastern Region of Nigeria, as Ezugwu *et al* (2002) citing Oladokun (2009) observed only 27.3% of

infertile persons know the correct meaning, legality and process of child adoption. This needs to be improved on.

Section 126 required that an adopter should apply to the court in a form, accompanied by marriage certificate (where applicable), birth certificate of each applicant, two passport photographs, a medical fitness certificate from a government hospital and other documents that may be required by court. Subsection 2(c) provides for the appointment of a guardian *ad litem* for the child to ensure that the whole process is in the best interest of the child, while an investigation on the background and claims of the adopter goes on. Chukam (2012) adds that the applicant must have informed the Social Welfare Officer of his intention, twelve months before the Adoption order is made. An interim Adoption Order however can be given, not longer than two years periods for investigations, which gives the applicant custody of the child before the eventual Adoption order. These are in line with international best practices which puts the interest and welfare of the child above that of the adopter.

However, these requirements are murky for adoptive parents who, perhaps, suddenly pick up a baby from a refuse dump, without sufficient time to make relevant applications and obtain an adoption Order. What obtains is that most often, such parents are compelled by the provision of the law, to hand the child over to the law enforcement agents, who in turn give such babies to Social Welfare officers who quickly hand over such children to prospective adopters who are willing and able to meet their cash demands. This lacuna therefore favours bribery and corruption in the process of child adoption.

Persons qualified to be adopted are categorized into two by section 128. The first category is children whose parents are not socially, economically, psychologically or otherwise able to take care of them and hence give them up, voluntarily for adoption. This includes teenagers. This has given room for the acts in “Baby Factories” as they explore this

avenue for profit making. This category, where it is known, requires parental consent. The second category is children abandoned, neglected, persistently maltreated and for their safety, need to be adopted, without parental consent even if they are known. Chukwu (2012) wonders the extent of parental maltreatment on a birth child that would warrant a permanent severance of parental relationship through adoption without consent, but recommended the invoking of part iv and v of the Act, that deals with the protection of children in need of care and protection respectively. Other child care options include wardship, guardianship, or fostering. All these terms mean almost the same thing and simply refer to the care, nurture and upbringing of a child or minor. Wardship however entails that the responsibility of the care of the child can either be assigned by the biological parents or the court. Fosterhood also entail the responsibility of the care of a child as assigned perhaps by family members for the care of a child that is not related by blood. A child according to section 277 of the Act, must be under the age of eighteen years.

Persons qualified to adopt are Nigerians who must be at least twenty-five years old, whether as single persons or married couples. The latter requires the consent of both spouses. A single person must however be at least thirty-five years old and of the same sex with the child to be adopted. Reasons for which individuals may wish to adopt, in the face of this gender limitations may not be met as a woman may not be able to adopt a male child and vice versa. The dread of sexual exploitation may be the latent reason behind this law. Yet it calls for a second closer look. An adopter must also be at least twenty-one years older than the adoptee.

By the dictates of section 144, which rejects and contravenes adoption of children outside the country, Nigeria can be said to be against International Adoption. Interstate adoption however can be done but with a grant of license by the Minister in charge of children Affairs. As clarified by Chukwu (2012), for a child to be transferred to a person for

whom interstate Adoption arrangements have been made. Intra state adoption, presumably have been under discourse.

On making an Adoption Order by the Court, the Chief Registrar is required by this Act, to maintain and record adoptions in an Adopted Children's Register. The National Population Commission is also required to maintain a similar register and record entries like the Names, sex of adopted child, name, surnames of adopter(s) date of Child's birth (if known) date of adoption order and description of officers and court that made it (Chukwu, 2012). This is important as the case between Mrs. Kayode Olaiya, a widow who adopted two sons with her husband, without proper documentation was lost to her brothers in-law, after her husband's demise as the Supreme Court insisted that only the National Population Commission Adopted Children's Register or that of the court that issued the Adoption order could substantiate that the adopted children were indeed those of the deceased person. This exposes the dangers of adopting through baby factories without proper documentation, extolling Agency Adoption (Chukwu, 2012).

By the 2003 Act, An adopted child is equal to a birth child, with rights, responsibilities and liabilities. Consequently, he inherits his adoptive parent's property, takes care of them at old age and maintains consanguineous relationship with members of the family of the adoptive parents. Other short falls of the Act, would amount to what Chukwu (2012) described as "drafting infelicities" and errors that is best appreciated in a legal treatise, which is outside the scope of this work. Practical and cultural perspectives of this Act shall be captured in the concluding reflections of this work.

4.2. Procedure for Adopting a Child

By the 2003 Act and the laws in most parts of the country, a prospective adopter is expected to make an application for an Adoption Order to a competent court but mostly

magistrate court which handles Juvenile matters. The court will appoint *ad litem* for the Childs representation, who is often the welfare officer in charge of the Childs area of residence. Other persons such as the probation officer may be appointed as *ad litem*, as the court pleases, to investigate circumstances surrounding the adoption and report back confidentially to the court in writing.

The prospective adoptive parent is expected to inform the Chief Welfare Officer of their intentions, three month before the court order is made. The adoptee must be in the custody of the Adoptive parents, three consecutive months before an adoption order is made, and both must be resident in Nigeria throughout this process. This process takes a long time and to Ibraheem (2013), legal hassles that go with adoption, the scrutiny adopters go through, the stringent guidelines and particularly, the long waiting list for children, that adopters go through, all make the idea of adoption especially through Public Agency, frustrating and indeed, a dilemma (Ibraheem; 2013).

4.3. Spiritual Implication of Child Adoption

The Igbo are in everything religious (Mbiti, 1979). The need for a child at the face of infertility and childlessness is aggravated by the religious implication of living and dying without a child. The solution is shrouded in the cyclic perception of existence or life as encapsulated in Igbo world view. Nwoye (2011) described it as life that moves in a complimentary fashion; lived from conception to death and transiting to ancestorhood, before reincarnating back into the world as a new born child. This is evidenced in the names given by the Igbo to their children, such as *Nnenna* – grandmother, *Nnamdi* – father lives on, and so on ((Ifesieh, 1989). According to Nwoye (2011), the belief in the transmigration of the living dead to new born babies explains the rationale behind the tenacious quest for children that must continue the existence of the family.

Aba ((2012) avers that the cult of ancestors or the living dead is sustained in every African society by the need to retain ties between the ancestors and the living in the family, clan and community. Hence, Africans nay Igbo fear dying without leaving behind somebody to remember them, by keeping communion and communication with the living. Awolalu (1978) and Quarcoopome (1978) share the view that social and religious communion and communication are maintained between the living and the dead, as active members of the same family, although the ancestors exist in the spirit world. Death and ancestorhood therefore is an extension of the family life into the spiritual world. Adopting a child that is not related in any way, to the family as a panacea to infertility and childlessness, negates and frustrates the essence of child bearing that is supposed to serve as a communication and communion link between the living and the living dead. Conversely depriving a child of the relationship between him and his bloodline by giving him out in adoption deprives him of the Communion and communication that is maintained through sharing of food, drinks in libation and offerings between the living and the dead, who is reffered to as the living-dead (Metuh, 1992). The need for the family, clan and community to retain the living – dead within the temporal sight of “human living experience” (*sasa*) compels the communion and communication that must exist between the living and the living dead through veneration (Awolalu & Dopamu, 1978, Mbiti, 1992). According to Aba (2012), it is exclusively the family members and rarely if ever, people not related to him; that the living dead appears and communicates with. Apparently, the progenies alone as family members share this interaction with the living dead.

Adoption is a severance of the communion or communication that is supposed to exist between someone and his living dead. Therefore, to the adoptee and adoptive parents, Child adoption is a misfit, which it’s spiritual or mystical implication will not augur well. A typical instance of the chaos that could be created by child adoption for both the adoptee and

adoptive parents was narrated by Mrs Maryann Okeke (Personal communication, 22 April, 2017), where a family in Onueke, in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi state, suddenly started experiencing strange negative incidents like car accidents, stagnation in business, deaths, divorce and undue hardship. The father of the family, Chief Ejinkeonye (72), a member of one of the mainline churches, went to enquire from a diviner about the cause of the evil occurrences. His inquisition revealed that a son of the family had been sold out and is crying out to be rescued. To the best of Chief Ejinkeonye's knowledge, none of his sons was missing. On further enquiry, a daughter of the family who is single, was implicated with complicity in the act. She eventually confessed that as an undergraduate, she conceived and carried the pregnancy to term, in a private hospital and with the aid of the proprietor in Enugu, gave the child out in adoption for a certain amount of money. Efforts by Chief Ejinkeonye's family to locate the child proved futile as the hospital had closed down and the proprietor/ doctor had relocated out of the country.

The fate of the family under the given situation can only be imagined as the narrator did not throw light on what happened afterwards. However, the adoptive parents no doubt would have had a traumatic shock of their lives, if after more than five years, they have showered love and care on the child, with family and neighbours knowing that they have a son, and the child or adoptee knowing them as his parents, only for Chief Ejinkeonye's family to show up to reclaim the child. The mystery of bloodline attachment can safely be implicated for arousing such chaos. This therefore leaves to question what is in bloodline, which makes the placement of a child "blood" into a strange family "bloodline", a mystical problem pursuant to the definition of child adoption as the placement of a child of another or strange parent in a strange family.

According to Advanced English Dictionary (2010), a person's bloodline refers to his ancestors over many generations, and the characteristics, believed to have been inherited

from the ancestor. It is a sequence of direct ancestors in a pedigree. Encarta dictionary defines bloodline as a line of descent from a specific human, with respect to the common characteristics shared by that ancestor's descendants. Spreckley (2004) identified deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) as a nucleic acid that contains all the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living things. To her, it is a personal blueprint that holds mental, physical, emotional and spiritual information of a person, which is given by both parents as matched and paired recessive genes, on conception of a child, from two different bloodlines. Consequently, a child carries a combination of the DNA of both parents, to form a unique one that shapes his identity. DNA therefore is that genetic mental, physical, emotional and spiritual heritage from an ancestor to his descendants in a pedigree, predetermining the offsprings personality and identity.

Pope IX decreed that life of a child began at conception. The 1997 Catechism of the Catholic Church also maintains that human life is sacred and emanates from conception (C.C.C., 2000). Onyewuenyi (2014) citing Temple refers to life that is transferred at conception as *muntu* which is the vital force in man, by which the ancestors perpetuate themselves in reproduction. Onyewuenyi (2014) refers to sperm which produces life at conception as “secretion of vital power”. It may not be misplaced therefore to conclude that “vital force, vital power, or DNA” as proposed by Speckley (2004)) all refer to the same secretion known as sperm. Within it, is contained the vital force-*muntu* or DNA, according to scientists, as extension of the ancestors to their descendants or a replication of the spiritual qualities of man in an offspring.

This theatrical narrative of bloodline, among Africans, precludes child adoption. Consanguinity or blood relationship, as valued by Africans, does not support or accommodate Child adoption, which is the introduction of a strange bloodline into that of the adoptive parents, with its attendant spiritual, mental, and emotional chaotic implications. The

researcher encountered an account of a single but aged woman, who adopted and raised a young girl. During her course of study in the University, the young lady went into cohabitation with her boyfriend and when reprimanded by her adoptive mother, challenged her authority to guide her moral life on the ground that she is not her biological mother. This turned the adoptive mother into an emotional wreck till date. While a biological or birth child affords the parents the rare privilege of seeing themselves replicated in their child, child adoption lacks that bonding or intimacy that is found between birth children and their parents, especially when there is a clash of interest. Mrs Chinonso Agu, 35 (personal communication, 4th April, 2018), corroborated this stance with an account of an adoptive father who was having illicit sex with his adopted daughter. DNA or bloodline is a link between the child and his ancestor and shapes the future life of the child. Olivelle (2017) posit that “*karma*” meaning “act,” which is a universal causal law of good or bad action, determines the future mode of an individual’s life. According to him, Indian soterriologies (theories of salvation) hold that future births (reincarnations) and life situations will be conditioned by actions performed during ones previous life. Similarly, the traditional Igbo believe that prequalification to the status of an ancestor, is from the acts performed while living physically (Anyanwu1999). A good life along with other social attainments like title taking, children among others, are necessary. Otherwise the dead cannot reincarnate. Bloodline which the Igbo call “*agburu*,” mystically transfer’s itself. Igbo traditional practice of *Ijuase* during marriage accentuates it, as enquiry must be made to ensure that marriage is not contracted with a family that has vices like epilepsy, murder, suicide, insanity as they are believed to be transferable through bloodline (Obi, 1970).

Adopting a child whose parental background is not known, exposes the adoptive parents to the risk of adopting a child whose parental background is capable of “polluting” the entire adoptive family, as the child is bound to exhibit those traits he has inherited

genetically from his biological parents (Johnson, 2008). However, there is an ongoing scholarly debate on whether nature, referring to genetic inheritance or nurture referring to training is responsible for molding a Child's life. It is termed the nature, nurture controversy (Omeire, 2016).

Christianity posits that God is a jealous God, who visits the sins of the fathers on the children, up to the fourth generation of those who disobey God (Exodus 34:7). The vicissitudes of life which some Christians suffer, are explained out, as curses, attracted on the children by the sins of the fathers or ancestors. This is the basis of the recent trend of family prayers often termed *olu ezinuno*, meaning, family work, where consequences of curses attracted by the sins of the fathers are averted (Ekwunife, 2016). An adopted child who may be experiencing or exhibiting some strange things traceable to his biological parents but in the care of the adoptive parents may be a victim of such "father's sins". All these do not favour child adoption after the Roman order. Arguably, kinship adoption that is common among the Igbo resolves these issues raised by the Roman culture of adoption but vary from each other in content.

4.4. Secularism Era as Precursor to Child Adoption

Child adoption as an option to solving infertility and childlessness is an age long practice that is found in ancient cultures of the world (Huard, 1956). Because it is not the natural and most desired mode of producing children, it is frosted with complexities in application, within various cultures. According to E. B. Tylor's definition of culture, it is the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society. Farooq (2011) identified some features of culture to include continuity which refers to "flow" of culture from one generation to another. Culture is responsive to the changing conditions of man and his

physical world. Every society has its own culture and ways of behaving or reacting to a given situation. Culture is not biologically inherited but learnt socially by man in a society. It develops in a society through social interaction and shared commonly by people in the society. Culture is accumulative which refers to germane and borrowed culture from outside. Culture is gratifying as it satisfies the need of the people in that society.

Child Adoption therefore is a cultural issue as it meets all these qualities of culture mentioned by Farooq (2011). Societies that do not practice child adoption in the ancient cultures are known to have imbued it in one way or the other, assenting to adoption of cultures from outside as a characteristic of culture. Those who had it, have modified it in one way or the other, to suit the modern demands of child Adoption in accordance with international standard and to suit the peculiar needs of their society. The evolution of the society from the ancient times, through the Middle Ages to the early modern era also witnessed the evolution of child adoption through these eras.

According to UNICEF (2011), modern adoption laws came into being in the second half of the 19th century. Enacted in 1851, the Massachusetts Adoption of Children Act required a written consent of the birth parents, an adopters joint application by husband and wife and the termination of rights of birth parents with concomitant transfer of such rights to the adoptive parents. It also empowered the judge to assess the capability of prospective adoptees, to “bring up the child and furnish suitable nurture and education” (Huard, 1956: 749).

Secularization according to Kunin (2003), “draws its inspiration from the Enlightenment and positivist ideas of human knowledge” (p.73). Madu (2003) has associated the era in which man seek solution to his childlessness and infertility to secularization. Child adoption of the modern times can safely be said to be propelled by secularization although it

has been inherent in human cultures dating from the ancient times. It has also pursued the trajectory of evolutionary trends just like other social systemic organs.

Shiner (1967), citing Kunin's definition of secularization, holds that it is "the desacralisation of the world" (p.21). This means the advancement of scientific or rational modes of reasoning in place of hitherto religious mode of reasoning or explicating issues. It is a historical process in which religion loses social and cultural significance. The term secular before 1648 AD was used by the Christians to differentiate between the sacred or holy and the mundane (Kunin, 2000).

Secularization refers to the belief that as society progress through modernization and rationalization, religion loses its influence on the society. Child adoption therefore is a secularized or put simply, a modernized and rational mode of reasoning, devoid of religious determining influence, aimed at producing or realizing a child, an heir and social security at old age. However, the traditional religious world view of the Igbo and Christian influence on the Ebonyian has continued to determine what actions h can take or not in a secularized world. Child adoption therefore comes under the mercy of these two religions, while determining whether to adopt.

This section is an attempt to show the philosophical background of the contemporary times when strangely, Child adoption is gaining grounds globally more than ever. In the case of Ebonyi State, it becomes a puzzle to see that the influence of Ebonyi traditional religious values is still strong, so much that it is competing with the Christian religious values which align with the humanist and secularist views on life crises issue such as childlessness. Humanism to Dante (2008) is in philosophy, the attitude that emphasizes the worth and dignity of the individual. Humanism holds that people are rational beings who possess within themselves the capacity for truth and goodness. The notion of truth in the Ebonyi Christian therefore comes under probe when we question whether he is converted truly to Christianity

if conversion means a change of beliefs and conviction. Yet he is holding on to his traditional religious beliefs on solution to childlessness in the form of sorrorrate, surrogate, or levirate arrangements. On the other hand , if the notion of goodness emphasizes rationality over spirituality, then Child adoption could be regarded as the appropriate solution to childlessness. The prevailing philosophical atmosphere of secularism could be adjudged acceptable to the twenty-first century human person but this strangely does not fit the childless Ebonyi Christian couple who is neither secularistic nor outrightly spiritual..

CHAPTER FIVE

CHALLENGES OF CHILD ADOPTION AMONG EBONYI CHRISTIANS

This chapter considers challenges facing child adoption among Ebonyi Christian couples who are facing childlessness. It highlighted those religious and social factors that pose as challenges which Christians in Ebonyi State experience in deciding whether to adopt or not.

5.1 Social Challenges

5.1.1 Age and Gender

The data that were gathered, from the respondent's local government of origin showed that most of the respondents were Christians and with almost all of them, married. The females within the study population represented slightly below the number of males in the study. The females were mostly within the age limit that are no longer actively involved in child bearing, representing the age bracket that is experiencing the highest rate of infertility due to the inception of menopause. Most females seek medical solution to infertility with the hope of remedying their health status and having their biological children. Among the Ebonyi people, a woman is often blamed when a child is not produced in marriage. The woman's upbringing is sometimes suspected to be responsible as inability to bear children may be attributed to wayward life before marriage. Mrs Maria Nwodom (Personal communication, 5th August, 2018) explained that there is the belief that every woman has a limited number of children in her womb. Therefore, if a woman kills all her divinely inbuilt children with drugs, abortion or any other harmful practice, she is bound to be barren. However, where she is lucky to be having children, wisdom demands that she should continue to bear them until all the children in her womb are out. This explains the resentment held by some Ebonyi Christians towards family planning. On the other hand, attributing a woman's childlessness to her past immoral life is one of the reasons why infertility is dreaded

by every woman. Further, there is the psychological feeling of insufficiency that is felt by a childless woman that fires her to resolve to prove that she is a woman indeed at the face of childlessness as only pregnancy and child bearing proves her otherwise. It is on this premise that mothers in law often refer to their childless daughters' in law as men, since they cannot carry pregnancy after sex, like a man. Mrs Nwodom further clarified that sometimes, when married women are engaged in extra marital affairs, it is meant to avert such suspicion, when they cannot achieve pregnancy with their husband after engaging in sex over a period of time. Mr Monday Mgbada, 33 (Personal communication, 16th March, 2016), confided in the researcher how a particular married woman pleaded with him to impregnate her as her husband has not been successful at it. Women dominated the study population while seeking data on the need for children in marriage while men dominated the study on cultural and religious factors causing challenges in child adoption. These accounts support the view that married women make the most effort to remedy childlessness in the Ebonyi State because "it is believed that it is her fault" (Agbo, 2014: 87). The age bracket that responded to this work, also represents the unpopular child bearing age of women in marriage. According to Wikipedia, (2018) a woman's fertility, reaches its peak in the early 20s and begins to drop significantly from 35years. The age bracket of the respondents on the research therefore is significant because it captures infertility in a woman's life.

Age is not a factor affecting the decision to adopt if need be. In other words, when it becomes obvious that a woman cannot bear her own biological or birth child, irrespective of her age, she is willing to consider the option of adopting a child. Otherwise put, Ikenna Nnaedozie (personal communication, 6th August, 2018) argued that a birth child is always preferred as adopting is only lesser alternative choice which however, is not discarded as a last resort. Also both gender of male and female value the need of a child equally. As a last resort, gender is not a factor affecting the decision to adopt a child if need be. That means a

married man or woman who is childless or wishes to adopt will not refuse to do so because of his or her gender. Just as a married man will want to have an heir even if he has to adopt, so also, a woman will desire to adopt. This is demonstrated in cases where some single ladies who are advanced in age without marriage went on to adopt with the hope of having children that will take care of them at old age and beyond that, some adopt to ensure that their property do not fall into the hands of their suspected enemies. The Childs Right Act of 2003 provides that such single parent's adoption must be done in alliance with the sex of the adoptive parent. Consequently, single ladies adopt female children while the Ebonyi single man is expected to marry and have children irrespective of his fertility health condition. Where he is impotent, he still goes ahead to marry with the expectation that the woman engages secretly in extra marital affairs to produce children that are deemed biological birth children. This has been showcased in some Nigerian movies, about the Igbo. Igbo culture is homogenous and therefore depicts the situation in Ebonyi State.

5.1.2. Educational Background and Fertility

Educational background of respondents showed that as the educational background of an infertile person increases, so also the chances of the individual to adopt, increases. Conversely, lesser educational background of an infertile person makes it less likely for the individual to adopt a child even as the need arises. Ojelabi *et al* (2015) corroborated this finding by stating that circumstances favoring child adoption are “lack of a living child, level of education, income of household and level of knowledge of adoption polices and processes” (p.76). It was observed that most of the respondents who favoured child adoption were virtually learned people who could communicate with the researcher in English language. Among them is Mr Monday Mgbada, (Personal communication, 16th July, 2016) who displayed mastery or good command of English language which showed that he must have at least attended secondary school or better still, is a graduate. It was also observed by the

researcher that the elderly men who are aged over sixty years could not imagine how, in the words of Chief Simon Ngene, 69 (Personal communication, 8th August, 2018), an uneducated farmer, “a man who can achieve erection will prefer to adopt a child fathered by another man” To Chief Ngene, it is like taking another man’s blood and calling it yours when you can produce your own child, with the mammoth of women flocking around in search of men. This notion held by Chief Ngene agrees with Okadigbo’s (1976) description of the personality of the African which holds that the African personality and identity favours multiple wife system that provides men for all the women in the harem for satiating sexual desires and also fulfillment of life goals. Child bearing is a life goal that every woman looks forward to, after sexual partnership must have been achieved in marriage, even through polygamy. “B” model in Reuben Hill’s Family Stress theory is those resources available to an individual for resolving the stress in his life, such as finances, educational background, religious affiliation, work place, culture and so on. The difference in educational background of the literate and illiterate persons therefore is of utmost relevance to the determination of the capacity of an individual to favour or disfavor child adoption.

Most of the women encountered during this work that indicated desires to have more children but without result, were found to be experiencing secondary infertility as they have already had one gender of child or needed more children than the number they already had. Only few were found to be completely infertile, and in search of any gender of child at all. However, it was discovered that quest or search for a male child weighed more than that of a female child. Infact, only few respondents desired to have female children while most desired male children. Doubtless, there are women who indicated desire to adopt female children. Mrs Felicia Nwonu 38 (Personal communication, 2nd july, 2018), explained that when women are hopeful that they can still bear their own birth children, they prefer to adopt females with the belief that the act will attract other children, resulting in regaining their fertility for other

birth children that will include males. If this hope materializes, it is expected that the adopted female will be given out in marriage while the male who is a birth child, inherits his biological fathers property, still indicating preference for consanguineous heir. Inheritance among the Ebonyians is by autochthony, through the father figure. Consanguineous procreation was the ideal basis for claims to inheritance.

In Ebonyi state, the need for a male child is aggravated by the culture of the Igbo that is patrilineal in nature. Although there are few communities that are matrilineal, patrilineage is the common order in Ebonyi State. Hence, a married man or woman will only feel complete and secure when he knows that he or she has a male child that will succeed him or her and inherit their property. Female children are also desired for peculiar reasons. A couple that already have a male child may desire to adopt a female child to provide companionship for the existing male child. The researcher observed that often, single ladies who are advanced in age without marrying and desire to adopt, prefer to adopt female children, as social insurance to care for them at old age. Such adoptees are not expected to inherit from any father figure as they eventually will marry and be subsumed into their husband's family. However, landed property may be inherited from the unmarried adoptive mother, where they exist and are administered in a will.

Infertility is a situation or condition which most people would not want to be associated with. From the whole study, most persons interviewed denied to be experiencing infertility whether of the primary or secondary type while only few admitted that they were infertile. Yet, those that denied experiencing infertility admitted to the need of either both or one gender of a child that prompted their visit to the hospital. The inconsistent attitude of respondents to the study support the view that Ebonyi people dread and detest infertility even when they are experiencing it. They will not therefore admit it even when they are suffering it. As Christians, their denial of infertility could be seen as positive confession in exercise of

their faith in God and trust in the doctors, that they will find solution to their childlessness. The researcher observed that most of the respondents were uncomfortable with the question about their state of fertility, while some stopped responding at that point. The interview method permits respondents to withdraw at any stage. The researcher's experience with a woman who faked pregnancy before adopting two children that are contrastingly different from each other in complexion, stature and mannerisms, was hostile, when the researcher tried to interview her about adoption, which suggested that she adopted her children. This supports the view that even the infertile would not want to be called infertile even as he or she is seeking fertility treatment with the hope of realizing a birth child. Consequently, more than half of the respondents maintained that they cannot adopt a child if need be.

The ABCX model by Hills (1994) underscored stressful events in marriage as events that are capable of disrupting the equilibrium or goals of the family, which include producing children. According to Ugwueye & Umeanolue (2015), procreation is of utmost importance to the Igbo because it is the grounds on which the family is preserved and continued. Infertility, childlessness or the lack of a particular gender which in Hill's model, is known as "A" stressors that must be addressed with "B" the family resources; that could be human, emotional and psychological. The resources of the family which is the couple in marriage include existing number of children, finances, educational attainment, fears entertained about adoption and their knowledge of child adoption in their society. "C" to Hills, refers to perception of events as stressors by the society, culture, religion, race, defining a crisis for the family. Simply put, how Igbo society, culture, and religion perceive child adoption all contribute in the decision of a family to take child adoption as a lesser alternative measure to remedy infertility.

5.1.3. Finances and Stigmatisation

Infertility and childlessness in Ebonyi traditional religion, Christianity and their cultures is regarded as a life crisis situation that must be addressed by man. The interaction of finances where it is sufficiently available to adopt, the emotional and psychological posture of the couple, that discountenances fears and shames of stigmatisation and with the approval of both the culture of the Igbo that is intertwined with his trado-religious convictions and Christianity that he is converted to all put into consideration, determine whether a couple can adopt or not.

The “X” factor at the end of Hills model refers to crisis that will result from the frustration of family goals that is not addressed. Such crisis may include fights, divorce, termination of lineage, where there is no heir to succeed members of the family and worse still, death like the instance cited by a Nigerian highlife musician, where a rich man, chinedu committed suicide after several years of marriage without a child. His frustration was that living and wealth acquisition was not worth it, without somebody to inherit it. This is the worst catastrophe that an Ebonyi family tries to avoid by marrying. Children therefore are the ultimate goal of the family and marriage.

Hills (1994) theory is psychological and presents strongly the importance of the feelings of fears and shame of stigmatization as indices that could encourage or discourage child adoption which affects the adoption triad; the adoptee, the adopter and the birth parent of the adoptee which is often, the teenager.

5.1.4 Culture and Male Child Factor

How the culture, religion and society in general look at the role of the adoption triad goes a long way to influence their reaction to child adoption. Some respondents vehemently

resented the idea of child adoption. Most couples with both genders of children did not hesitate to express how child adoption is a misnomer. Reasons proffered, for which some respondents did not favour child adoption were many but the researcher have tried to cluster them into the following opinion shades. They are,

Religious belief and Psychology including stigmatization.

Ardent faith in God as a Christian and Fear of the child's future character.

There are children already and Strange bloodline not approved by culture.

Inward conviction of the hope of having one's own child.

Hope in western medicine's capability to solve the problem of infertility.

Cost of adoption.

Among these reasons proffered are sociological, medical and religious reasons. The expression of confidence in the capacity of medical profession to deal with any health challenge that is inimical to child bearing is inherent among the educated or elite class, irrespective of the gender. Stigmatisation that is suffered by the adoption triad was reechoed repeatedly by most respondents as reason why child adoption is not an option to be considered. Infact both couples with children and the ones experiencing infertility as reasons for wanting to adopt agree that stigmatization is a factor in child adoption that does not favour the practice. However the couples with children feel that their sexual health status negates every conception held about adopters, which is infertility. It is only natural that a couple that have some biological children as much as they wish would not consider a lesser option such as child adoption. Child adoption is an inferior option of begetting a child. Birth children are most ideal. Cost of adoption has been adduced by some scholars as reason why some people who have need to adopt cannot do so. Where the financial capacity of a couple

cannot afford to adopt, they are helpless and cannot do otherwise. The finance of a couple therefore helps to determine the likely option they might choose while experiencing infertility. The “B” model in Reuben Hills’ Family stress theory of child adoption supports this point.

There are couples who maintain that a Childs genetic inheritance will always play out in his or her future life. “*Agwo aghaghi imu ihe di ogonogo*” meaning literally that the snake will not fail to bear a long object, is a figurative expression that implicates the moral and other transferable qualities of the adopted Childs biological mother. There is always the feeling that a teenage mother, who gave birth to the adopted child, was morally loose and that quality with other peculiar attributes will be transferred to the adopted child that she bore. Igbo traditional religion regards a human as blood. Marriage is also synonymous with blood mixture. Therefore before marriage or blood mixture is embarked upon, thorough enquiries must be made to ensure that a pure blood is not mixed with a polluted blood. Otherwise put, a pure blood lineage is not contaminated by an impure blood lineage. Likewise, bringing in a blood nay a child of another blood lineage into a family exposes the family to the risk of pollution. Okodo’s submission that an *Osu*’s involvement in the life of a free born is capable of polluting the later, serves as a warning that needs to be heeded when considering the option of child adoption. This is important where the possibility of tracing the biological parents of the adopted child is possible.

Even some health situations like epilepsy and insanity traceable to a biological parent constitute a risk factor emerging from child adoption. Igbo dread marriage or any form of blood mixture with persons found with either of such ailments. Psycho- social dispositions like suicide and stealing also attract the same resentments from the Igbo. Chief Simon Ngene (personal communication, 3rd June 2018) added that the stigma attached to stealing and treatment meted on thieves when caught, is dreaded. According to him, stealing is regarded

as an inherited or genetic trait that attracts market disgrace with the culprit stripped naked in the pristine Igbo culture. Nobody would like to have a child that is capable of bringing such shame on him, even worse still as an adopted child. This genetic dread is considered in Reuben Hills Theory as the “C” model which is the perception of the society.

5.1.5 Social Effects of Child Adoption

It is pertinent to note that the effect of child adoption to the society is both negative and positive. On a negative note the need for child adoption and the practice in recent time could be credited with the recent activities in the baby factories where young people engage in Child bearing just for the purpose of money making. Other allied ills with it is child trafficking, prostitution, immorality and even murder as demonstrated in cases where children are bought in the pretense of Child Adoption and killed for the purpose of rituals.

Child adoption has the capacity to cause trouble in a family. Mrs Atu’s adoption of a male child that landed her in court when her husband’s family wanted to share her late husband’s property, was opposed or rather rejected by the village elders who mediated in the matter before it went to court. To them the late Mr Atu did not approve of the adoption before his demise. Therefore the elders argued that they will not uphold the adoption as their late son may not have approved it on the grounds of their tradition which prefers levirate arrangement also called “*Ikuchi nwanyi*” which the woman vehemently rejected. This has remained a court issue up till the moment of carrying out this work. Family quarrels therefore can be traceable to child adoption as demonstrated in this case.

On a positive note, Child adoption is a reliable means of resolving the problem of childlessness and infertility among married people as its failure rate is minimal compared to other assisted reproductive technology. The ease and short time frame within which children are gotten from the baby factory prompted Agbo (2014) to describe the process as

comparable with buying “candy from the confectionary”. Child adoption therefore is an efficient means of solving life crises issue. This will discourage child theft by couple who can afford to adopt, and instill peace in the home. Childlessness is one major reason for family quarrel because it frustrates the major reason for marriage.

Child adoption also afford the child that would not have been given a good life, a better opportunity as the adoptive parents are always better placed to care for the child than the biological mother that gave the child out in adoption. It also saves the child that would have been forced into crime from the ills and consequences of criminality. The birth mother is also saved the burden of raising a child that she is not prepared for, thereby distorting her own life. Sometimes the dread of this burden leads some teenagers into abortion that could end their lives. The adoption triad, the society at large and the family in particular benefit immensely from Child adoption.

5.2 Religion as a Challenge

Religious reasons for unwillingness to adopt carried the highest number of respondents. According to the inclusion criteria into this work, all were basically Christians in religion. However, some implicated their traditional religious beliefs as reasons why they cannot adopt. Among the Ebonyi people, even as Christians, traditional religious convictions are given its right of place. Ebonyi people’s worldview is used to perceive reality even as Christians. That is why even some avowed Christians and even priests dread dying without a successor. The names *Obiefuna* - may my lineage not go extinct, *Obiechina* - may my lineage not close up, and names like such, represent the innermost prayer and desire of persons who have overcome infertility. This stance, is supported by the traditional religious values of the Igbo that is innate in the Ebonyi Christian. 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 secretly. Further, the African nay Igbo traditional religious perception of the cyclic nature of life is opposed to the Christian lineal perception of life. Yet the Ebonyi Christian unconsciously pursues his innate trado-religious beliefs through a desperate search for a child which child adoption offers solution to.

However, Christianity promises unlimited solution to all of man's life crises issues, which includes a birth child. As a prequalification criteria, for the blessing of a child, Christianity demands uncompromising faith in God. Therefore considering the option of child adoption is compromise, amounting to faithlessness that disqualifies the Christian from receiving his heart desires which is a birth child. It is unfortunately a dilemma situation which some Christians will attempt to pursue by looking up to God for a birth child in exercise of their faith.

It is important to discuss the respondents' views about the acceptance of adoption in their religion, bearing in mind that all are Christians. The differences in their religion therefore can only mean the denominational bounds within the Christian religion. By the area culture approach to the analysis of Ebonyi Christian couples experience, when religion is mentioned, also the traditional religion and worldview of the Igbo is also considered even as avowed Christians. The argument of strange bloodline as strong influence of the traditional religion on the life of the Ebonyi person therefore count. Sunday Alike & Mercy Nwodom (Personal communication, 7th August, 2018) agreed that their Christianity supports child adoption while Cletus Otubo, Friday Mbam and Evelyn Edeze among others did not favor child adoption within their Christian denomination. It therefore implies that more than half of the respondents as Christians are not convinced to adopt, at the face of childlessness and infertility, on the basis of their Christian religious conviction. 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 religion were all polygamists. Even ardent Christians in demonstrating their faith in Gods ability to give them their own biological children will vehemently refute adoption, so as not to compromise their faith. It is significant because it affects the willingness of adopters to actually take an adopted child. In other words, some people are not willing to adopt in Ebonyi State because their religion does not support them to do so. This does not mean that adoption is strange in Ebonyi as Mr Eme Emmanuel and Mrs Nwangbo Juliana (Personal communication, 4th May, 2018) admitted that their brand of Christian religion supports child adoption. Likewise they too will be favorably disposed to adopt but constituting a lesser proportion of the individuals who have need to adopt and would take up the option.

Among the respondents who favored child adoption in their Christian denomination or encouraged it, none could cite a particular passage of the bible that supports or encouraged a childless person to adopt. Other reasons proffered for favoring child adoption in their Christianity was rationalized. On the other hand, some respondents whose religion did not favour child adoption could not profer a reason to support their claim. One Chief Nwiboko 72 (personal communication, 7th August, 2018) even claimed that adopters will go to hell as a core traditionalist although he attends church on Sundays. This therefore shows that child adoption is not a practice that is rooted in the Christian religion. However, it has no justifiable reason for being rejected. It is a culture that emanated from the Ancient Rome. 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.

5.3. Knowledge of the Meaning of Adoption

The knowledge of child adoption as legal adoption through an agency or government is retained by only few of the respondents. People who responded that they “don’t know” and “No response” both formed majority showing that proper knowledge of what child adoption is, is very low. The most popular knowledge of child adoption therefore is “buying a child privately” which is popular due to the fact that money changes hands before adoption can take place, favouring the recent trend where persons who wish to adopt, look up to baby factory operators, as a source of the solution to their need. This latter view has become so widespread that it is about the most prompt means of adopting in recent times because, the adopter becomes a mother overnight once she has money to pay for the child. Adopting through a baby factory best supports faked pregnancy before adoption as the expected time of realizing a baby can be predetermined, so that the supposed date of delivery can coincide with the period of the adoption. This practice is attractive as it abates the stigma associated with infertility and childlessness. It also gives the adoptee, the legitimacy of a birth child, undermining the importance of an adoption order. Such adopters simply obtain birth certificates for their babies rather than an adoption order.

Challenges associated with adoption through government agency seem to lend support to the activities in the baby factory because financial constraints, and administrative bottleneck that were identified as challenges of adopting through government agency, are both addressed at the baby factory. C. Nwankwo, 45 (personal Communication, 17th August 2017) informed the researcher that she applied for adoption to the ministry of women affairs, Ebonyi state, since two years ago, have had to bribe and spend heavily but till the date of the interview, nothing had come out of all that effort. She regretted that if she had spent such money at the baby factory, she would have had instant result before then.

Conversely, child adoption through baby factory, have its own merits despite the “attacks” against it. The perennial clamp down on baby factories as noticed in the South East generally, is because of the inherent ills such as making babies for the sake of money, lack of check or regulation of process and identity of adopters, knowing that human ritualists can also buy babies for their evil acts. As long as human beings continue to relate, unwanted pregnancies among teenagers must always occur. Abortion is not a better option when unwanted or unexpected pregnancy occurs. There should be an instrument or mechanism for coping with unwanted pregnancy among teenagers, within government ambit. After all, if there are no “unwanted” pregnancies, with the rising rate of infertility in the society, there will not be children to be adopted, as a panacea to the need of these childless couples.

5.4. Inherent Fears in Child Adoption

Most respondents have fears about child adoption. Some respondents are convinced about various forms of fear in child adoption while only an insignificant few do not have fears. Most significant among the fears, is the nature of the adopted child, which took a paramount place. Omeire (2016) referred to it as the nature, nurture controversy. It is believed among the Igbo that the spiritual, psychological, social and physical nature of the biological mother and father of the adopted child will always be replicated in the adopted child. This means that the nature of the parent will always be replicated in the child. The nature or biological parenthood of the adopted child is often considered as abhorring as it is associated with illegitimate sexual relations. It is therefore feared that where a thief for instance is responsible for the conception of a child, that child will most likely turn out to be a thief. Although some scholars argue that the upbringing or nurture of the child is what shapes or moulds the child’s personality. Such fears, implicate the genetic composition or heritage of the child, that is determined by that of the mother and father. Next in the order of fear is “fear of losing the adoptee” after he has been raised by the adoptive parents, to the

biological parents. Among the Ebonyi people, it is only the secrecy of the biological parenthood of a child that secures a child's stay in his adoptive parent's home. The Ebonyi person believes that "blood is thicker than water." Therefore biological parenthood supersedes every socio-cultural maxim like adoption. Hence, whenever a child is able to identify his natural parents, he will most likely jettison his adoptive parents. Secrecy therefore is the only tool for keeping the adoptee in his adoptive parent's home. This fear is potent because the society will always harbor some persons who know the adoptive status of every adoptee and such persons are always under pressure to divulge the secret whenever their interest is jeopardized by the adoptee.

Mrs C. Agu, 40 (Personal Communication, 5th January 2018) narrated to the researcher how a contender in the aspiration for the position of a traditional ruler was intimidated out of the race, although he was the most preferred option of the masses, simply by the revelation that his known biological parents were actually his adoptive parents.

Stigmatisation is a mark of disgrace and shame. Microsoft Encarta Premium (2009) summarized stigmatization as the shame or disgrace attached to something regarded as socially unacceptable. Stigmatization is dreaded by the adoptive parent, not only for himself as the Igbo culture emphasizes consanguineous procreation which is the basis for inheritance. Therefore, an adoptee is feared to be under the risk of being denied allotments especially from the community, where his adopted status is known. The adoptive parent therefore considers the stigma as a threat and even denial to himself. Even where the adoptive parent bequeats his possessions to the adoptee, there is still the fear that his family members, will contend with the adoptee over the property. The researcher witnessed a contemporary case in court between Mrs. Arnold Atu, a widow who adopted a son and her brothers in law, the late husband's family. The contention between the parties is that the family members are arguing that Mrs. Atu who was childless till her husband's demise, adopted a male child in her

husband's name, to stop the family of her husband from laying claim to her late husband's property. No wonder, Nwosu and Onwe (2015) asserts that "a childless widow's life is one of misery" (p.44).

Fear of stigmatization therefore is entertained in the interest of the adoptee. It is also entertained by the adoptive parents as adoption speaks volumes of the inability of the couple to produce their own biological child.

Hedge fertility (2017) noted that World Health Organization has discovered that 15% of married couples globally are infertile and most of them suffer social stigma that prevent them from even seeking medical help. In Igboland, at the face of infertility and childlessness, stigmatization sets in, mostly from mother-in-laws who label daughters in laws with names like *Nwanyi-Aga* - the barren, *Nwoke* man, and so on. Nwosu and Onwe (2015) observed that attitudes that follow infertility that is dreaded include "gossips, scornful laughter, downgrading looks, direct/indirect reference to their plight and sometimes open confrontation" (p.43). These attitudes are also meted out on adoptive parents as stigmatizing situations that are dreaded. This work however has shown that stigmatization does not actually prevent most childless couples from adopting; when the need arises. Stigmatization is often defied at the face of childlessness, thereby explicating the persistence of the practice of child adoption in the society.

The fear of being labeled kidnappers or child abductors and arrest of adoptive parents depend largely from the source of the adoption. Often children adopted from baby factories spontaneously reach the custody of the adoptive parents, thereby not affording them the time to formalize the adoption. This exposes one of the inherent lapses in adopting from baby factory. Also fear of the reaction of the adoption agency in case the child dies, as some

respondent averred, are based on lack of proper information on how to communicate with the agency.

There is also fear of losing the adoptee's love and care, on discovery of his or her adopted status. This is strong and practical as blood relationship through natural birth serves as a bond that does not allow the individuals, the choice to love or not to. But adoption that is devoid of blood relationship leaves the adoptee and adoptive parents, the choice to love and be bound to each other in a child-parent relationship. This is often occasioned by a clash of interest or variation of interests and opinions. According to Simmonds (2004), children are born with a biological drive to seek proximity to a protective adult for survival. Among other benefits from this instinct in the child which scholars refer to as attachment or bonding, is the love and trust of the mother whether, adoptive or biological. This is achieved through the care of the child from birth to the age of adolescence (Brown and Ward, 2013).

Fear of the consequences of adopting is not significant. That means that despite all these fears entertained by respondents, it still does not restrain infertile persons who are considered desperate, from adopting a child, when they need to do so.

5.5. Acceptance of Child Adoption in Igbo Community/Tradition

Igbo tradition is homogenous as the owners of the tradition who speak Igbo language, share a common culture and occupy the area known as Igboland (Ike and Edozien; 2001). Ebonyi State tradition or culture which is known as *omenani*, however harbor slight variations that still does not discredit its homogeneity. Hence, the Igbo proverb, "*Igbo n'asu nonu mana akwa ukwara oboru ofu*-literarily meaning that the Igbo speak in divers tones but the sputum of their cough is same". This means that the slight variation in their sub-cultures does not mean differences in Ebonyi State.

Child adoption is accepted in the tradition of some of the respondents. This could be regarded as an influence of the traditional knowledge of adoption which is found in kinship adoption. Virtually every sub- culture or tradition in Ebonyi State can therefore be said to practice kinship adoption. Some communities hold the naming of *Ogbo*, meaning name sake as potential adoptive children. According to Ikechukwu Edeali, (Personal communication, 11th October, 2017), a child who is named after somebody is called *ogbo*. The elder whose name is given to a child takes care of the later as though he is his child. Where such person wishes, he is at liberty to take over the raising of the child. However, the child continues to bear her biological parents name, inherits landed property from his biological parents and returns ultimately to his biological parent's family. 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.

Ebonyi communities and tradition's respondents are not immune to the effect of westernization and globalization that have impacted on other Igbo societies. Whenever a

cultural issue is viewed from Ikara in Okodo's (2005) perception of culture as our understanding of the world around us, physical and metaphysical, that shapes our attitude to it, it implicates the religious belief and world view of the people. 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. Okodo (2005) captured the scenario when he stated that an example of cultural conflict is the transplanting of western culture to Africa as demonstrated in the transplanting of child adoption from the west, into Igboland and particularly Ebonyi State.

Child adoption in the modern sense is a western culture that was transplanted to Africa but is strongly resisted by communities that are still holding strongly to their traditional religious values and world view. As Ebonyi Christians who are holding on strongly to their traditional religious values, it is only natural to expect that syncretism will be the order of the traditional religious life of such. Ibenwa (2015) described a scenario where the Christian 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. This is opposed to western Christian worldview that is individualistic and support child adoption.

Ebonyi community, traditional or cultural interest is a strong factor that determines their willingness to adopt. This implies that in Ebonyi traditional communities where child adoption is not accepted infertile persons from such places will not wish to adopt but seek other traditional alternatives to childlessness, such as polygamy, sorrorate, surrogate or levirate arrangements, even as Christians. This therefore is one of the objectives of this work, which poses the question of why traditional Ebonyi persons, who have experienced conversion to Christian religion, still hold on to Ebonyi traditional religious values.

The dual religious posture constitutes a source of dilemma for the contemporary Ebonyi Christian who has been caught up by the vicissitudes of life in form of infertility and childlessness. Christianity as imported into Africa rejects and decries traditional religious panacea to infertility through polygamy and its likes. Some respondents indicated that they cannot adopt because of their faith in God's procreative and healing power. That means that religion can encourage, prompt or influence the Ebonyi man to adopt or do otherwise. Even where Christianity supports child adoption, Igbo traditional religion disapproves of it, thereby generating a situation of dilemma. 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. He recommended a polishing of the Christian message to suit the African psyche through cordial dialogue. Traditionalisation entails the recognition of the right of others to hold views that are dear to them, their identity and self reliance. Reviewing conversion of Christians in Igboland to situate Madu's recommendation, is imperative here.

5.6. The Ebonyi Christian couples Experience of Conversion

Madu (2004) acknowledge that "one can definitely notice the continuous interaction of religion and culture" (p.59). In his view, the Christian religion that was preached to the Igbo, was birthed in Palestine and Rome, cosmopolitan empires that harbored elements of Hellenism, Syncretism, Platonism, Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. On arrival to Igboland, this naturally produced a Christianity that is clothed with "accidentals" (p.59) that are foreign, culture wise, to the Igbo. The value system and attitudes of Christianity that arrived Igboland, was strange and sought to eliminate Igbo traditional religious values and attitudes (Mbalisi *et al*, 2015). Madu (2004) warned that "an erosion of peoples traditional beliefs is

tantamount to the destruction of that society” (p.60). It was only natural that when Christianity arrived the shores of Igboland, the traditional religion of the people fought for its self preservation, leading to conflicts and rejection of the alien religion, by the natives (Okeke *et al*, 2017).

Christianity sought to convert the Igbo to it, and with its aggression labeled all that they did fetish, idolatry, paganism and all forms of derogatory names (Anyanwu, 1979). The missionaries however did not come with just the message of Christ but according to Nwadiolor & Umeanolue (2016), they offered western education, as a bait to lure the Igbo to Christianity. To them, education was meant to equip the people for white collar job, elevate their social status and alienate them from their traditional religion and culture through the learning of English language.

Kelechi (1971) identified another bait in colonial or British imperialism which came alongside with Christianity and economic interest. According to him, the acceptance of Christianity by the male adults of Igboland, afforded them the opportunity to escape various forms of colonial over-rule. Hence the foremost converts of the missionaries were apparently attracted by political power and economic benefits associated with their conversion into Christianity. The expansion of colonial frontiers therefore expanded the missionary propaganda which the Catholics and the protestants were astute to expand along individually. To Ekechi (1971) interdenominational rivalry, especially between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, was acute, as a result, and still persist till contemporary times.

The involvement of ex-slaves which Simon Jonas pioneered in 1841, saw the beginning of the evangelization of Igboland (Isichei, 1977). Remarkably, social outcasts, like the *Osus*, the twins abandoned in the grooves and evil forest, and other social rejects, turned out to be the foremost converts of the missionaries without adverse consequences from the

native gods. Again the bait of social acceptance and security lured these persons into the newly arrived faith. It therefore appears to reason that the Christian religion that came to Ebonyi State was received due to baits with which it was packaged. As converts of Christianity, the Ebonyi person therefore do not have any qualm of conscience retaining his traditional religious values along with the proffession of the alien religion which he was converted to. The need arises, to ascertain what indeed conversion is.

5.6.1. Conversion

Conversion entails the abandoning of adherence to one denomination and affiliating with another. It could be inter-religious or intra-religious system. “Inter” is, from one religious system to another like christianity to Islam. It could also be “intra,” from one denomination in a religious system to another denomination Falkenberg (2009) identified types of conversion to include,. Active conversion is one done by free choice or will due to a change in beliefs. This is the most sincere act of conversion. Other forms of conversion include secondary conversion which is conversion to a new religion due to relationship with a convert of such a religion like the conversion of a spouse, a child by the parent or a business or work associate. Death bed conversion is the adoption of a particular religious faith shortly before dying. Forced conversion is adoption of a new religion or irreligion under duress. Such converts often covertly continue with the beliefs and practices originally held, while outwardly behaving as converts (Falkenbergs 2009). Conversion for convenience or re-affiliation for convenience is an insincere act, often done for relatively trivial reasons that are materialistic or in keeping with a social status.

The Ebonyi Christian can apparently be said to have been converted to Christianity due to the “baits” that are geared towards materialism and pursuant to attainment of social status of the elites, which education that was introduced by the missionaries, tried to realize.

The overt profession of the Igbos as “predominantly Christians” and the covert patronage of the Ebonyi Traditional religious beliefs and practices exemplified in the insistence on consanguinity that denies and excludes child adoption, is typical of conversion for convenience. Falkenberg (2009) describes this as an insincere act. Active conversion due to change in beliefs could have also taken place among the Igbos. The establishment of church in the evil forest without adverse consequences as recorded by Achebe (1972) supported the maxim “*mbekee wu agbara*”- the whiteman is spirit. It could have also triggered sincere change of beliefs in the Ebonyi person. Education that was introduced by the missionaries was duely necessary. Language barrier between the missionaries and the native could only have been broken and the fraudulent activities of the interpreters, checked through literacy.

Fisher’s (1973) theory of conversion therefore fits the situation in Ebonyi State. First conversion, in his theory, is the quarantine stage, which is a change of religious affiliation by the foremost converts from African Traditional Religion. This obviously was not experienced by the entirety of the Igbo people. This was the era that those foremost fervent converts to Christianity engaged in the destruction of the shrines and scared places of those deities that had hitherto alienated them from the society as “*Osu*” or outcast (Nwadiolor & Umeanolue; 2018, Anyika; 2007). The second conversion that Fisher mentioned, the mixing stage was the stage when the natives began to join the church en masse through conversion for convenience, after they noticed that those “outcasts” and dregs of the society that they hitherto ostracized, were assuming positions of leadership in the society as, court clerks, teachers, interpreters, white man’s aides and so on. They were therefore not sincere in their act, but retained their traditional religious values covertly while they overtly claimed to be converted. The mixing stage, occurred at this point when Nationalist movements saw the emergence of these converts in their own independent churches popularly referred to, as African Independent churches, where African traditional religious practices and values were

incorporated into the euro-Christian tradition. Such group admitted polygyny into Christianity as solution to infertility just like in the traditional religion. Over a period of time, another phase, the reform stage of conversion was noticed, lingering into contemporary times in Igbo religious history. This is the era of the evangelicals, revivalists and protestant orthodox fervency, where the acts of the Holy Spirit is extolled. This era insist on a return to the initial teachings of the Christian faith which decries polygyny as a solution to childlessness but rather faith in God through the Holy Spirit, which God is willing and able to make the barren to conceive and bear children. The influence of western education imported into Ebonyi State, with its allies, technologies like assisted reproductive Technology and Information Technology have also ferried the knowledge of invitro fertilization, cloning, child adoption and so on, into Igboland. The challenge therefore is, whether total faith and dependence on God should be upheld, or child adoption should be pursued, to realize a child at the face of infertility as a Christian in the era of return to fervency.

The family systems theory also called human ecology theory by Brofenbrenner (1979) described the various human ecological systems that interplay in child adoption. According to his line of thought, the Ebonyi person reacts to the various human ecological systems around him, to inform his action. Such systems are the micro-system, the meso-system, exo-system, the macro-system and the chrono-system. The micro-system is the institution and groups that directly impact on the individual to shape his action. Every member of the adoption triad has a family, religious institution, school or office, friends and neighbors or city setting where he dwells. His interaction with such people and places, certainly shapes the individual's action. The teenager who is popularly known around her vicinity as a born again Christian will likely be driven by shame and stigma, to resort to abortion, if she gets pregnant out of wedlock, in contrast to one that is widely known to be a flirt, who might prefer to go into a baby factory to have her baby and give him out. An

infertile or childless couple that belong to the group that fisher referred to as the fervency stage of conversion, will most likely insist on faith in God for a biological child, without adoption than a couple, belonging to the mixing stage of conversion, who would arrange for a second wife as supported by the traditional Igbo religion. Both couples are remarkably Christians but will react differently because of their peculiar micro-system.

The meso-system refers to relations, interconnections or interaction between the various individuals, groups, institutions in the microsystem. The relations of the childless Ebonyi Christian to his church, traditional religion, peers at work or school or even family members explains why two persons in the same group or religious affiliation may react differently. An infertile or childless person or couple that is intimate with any of his micro-system, will naturally be influenced by the opinion of the system. However, whenever two or more of the components of the micro-system are attached equally to the individual, a situation of dilemma sets in. The Ebonyi Christian who is overtly a Christian but covertly a practitioner of Igbo traditional religion, will find himself in a situation of dilemma as to which religion to adhere to openly. This meso-system operation explains also why a childless man may align with his mother to marry another wife or where strongly related to his wife in love, choose to adopt against the wish of his family members or perhaps his traditional religious values. It therefore suggests that the relations or interconnections, or interaction of components of the meso-system with the individual, psychologically impact on him and shape his actions and decision.

The exo-system refers to the outcome of interactions or relations between two or more settings in the micro-systems, which are outside the individual. Interactions within a micro system like the church, which this work has found significant, in form of preaching, criticism of conduct, and peers disapproval, stigmatization or even ostracism, is an example of the interactions of two or more settings. For instance, the rule that a polygamist must be denied

the Holy Communion in the Catholic Church and the pressure of the family members, that a man without a male child cannot take a title can force the man out of the church, or at best, resort to passive membership, while he takes a second wife to beget a child. Also the feeling of rejection of social status of a child at school or among peers typical of stigmatization can deform the child into a social deviant. The macro-system refers to cultural patterns, values, dominant beliefs, ideas, political and economic systems that produce strong effect on the individual while interacting. The place of the culture of the Ebonyi person in relation with child adoption is so obvious that it cannot be overlooked. Political will power to address child adoption among infertile Ebonyi Christians has only resulted in bureaucratic bottlenecks, high cost of adoption and corrupt practices. The dominant belief of people has resulted to their worldviews.

Every individual is strongly influenced by one or more worldviews, traditional, aboriginal, acquired by contact or imported. The macro-system therefore is the basis of credibility of the action of childless couple. Where the individual is strongly attached to this world view of his traditional religion, he resorts to polygamy or other trado-based solution. However the stronger influence of the Christian world view may compel the infertile Igbo Christian to wait on God. Further still, where the denomination of the infertile Ebonyi Christian encourages him to adopt, while waiting on God for a birth child, he can go ahead to adopt.

The chrono-system refers to the involvement of time dimension in the constancy or change in the individual's environment, determining his actions. Ikechukwu Edeali 37 (Personal Communication, 11th October, 2017), observed that as the age of the respondents who favored child adoption increased, their desire to adopt also increased, although some above 45years did not show interest to adopt apparently because they are looking up to God in exercise of their faith in the unlimited power of God to give them their birth child. Couples

who have male children but lack females can afford to refuse to adopt where their human eco-system does not support it. A single woman above 40 years and has a source of livelihood who becomes pregnant, out of wedlock is more likely to keep the baby than a teenager who has no source of livelihood and finds it is more financially rewarding to give the baby out in adoption through the aid of the baby factory operators, where she profits financially from her mistake. Family systems theory, as a sociological theory explains every situation affecting any member of the adoption triad.

In Ebonyi State, children are often adopted from “baby factories” as a preferred source, rather than government approved source, because of the ease. Babies aged between one day to two years old, are preferred because of the ignorance of their parenthood, as the adoptive parents would wish the child to grow up knowing just them as parents. Such children are sometimes not dully captured in the relevant adoption registers with the court and the National Population Commission. The idea of faked pregnancy therefore appeals to reason as it gears towards giving legitimacy to the child like a natural birth that does not require such papers. Where they pursue government documentation, it is meant to obtain a birth certificate. The secrecy and ills associated with activities in the “baby factories”, such as sale of babies to potential ritualists, deliberate impregnation of teenagers to make babies in exchange for money, trafficking of children for sex slavery, unregulation of the proprietors and adopters activity, to mention but a few, all make the whole operations of baby factories, illegal. There is no law in Nigeria, neither will any responsible legislative house, legitimize such activities, thereby giving credibility to the incessant raids of law enforcement agents, on known “baby factories.

“Unwanted” or “out of wedlock” pregnancy among teenagers have always existed in human history and will continue as long as human race exists. With the rate of infertility in Igboland as high as 30%, the need for children will always abound and be satiated by

children produced as “unwanted”. There is need for the government to ‘hijack’ this organized crime, re-structure it within government framework and give it a legal backing that befits its new structure, protecting all the parties in the adoption triad and at the same time, ensure that it is a pragmatic process of adoption. This could be packaged in the “baby box or baby hatch” system.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Summary

Summary is a short statement that gives the main points of something and not the details. This work therefore is about the challenges experienced by the Ebonyi Christian couple who have need or desire to adopt children but are faced with a lot of challenges, thereby discouraging them from adopting. The challenge is hinged on the fact that child adoption is not the best means of having children but rather through natural birth. However, even as a lesser option of realizing children, the Ebonyi Christian couple is torn between the choice of adopting because his innate traditional religious belief and world view does not approve of taking in another person's blood to be his along with his Christian faith that sees adoption as a compromise of faith in Gods omnipotence and procreative ability to give him his own biological child as promised in the bible. Therefore either way, adopting because he needs a child and not adopting because his Christian faith will be compromised, is a dilemma experience that needs to be resolved.

The work therefore reviewed the type of conversion to Christianity that the Ebonyi Christian had that still allowed him to retain two opposing world views; African traditional religion and Christianity, since world views strive to stifle each other (Madu;1997). In other words, if conversion is a turning from a previous belief to another, one wonders why the Ebonyi Christian is still holding on to some of his traditional religious beliefs.

The work used family stress theory, family systems theory, conversion theory, the area culture approach and historical approach to analyse the findings that were made through oral interviews and personal observation. It was discovered that the Ebonyi Christian retained

his traditional religious beliefs because the historical trend of conversion that he had was basically of attractions to good things or bait as Ugwueye and Umueanolue (2016) puts it. In other words, it was conversion of convenience which was not deep rooted, that took place in Ebonyi State as a whole. Although it developed to a stage of fervency, at the face of life crisis situations, he resorts back to his traditional religious system for solution. The need for a child is a life crisis situation. This explains why some Christians at the face of childlessness against the teaching of Christianity, resort to polygamy rather than adoption.

The work therefore recommended what Madu (1997) called traditionalisation, which is using traditional values to interpret and find solution to life crisis situations within the Christian message. It encouraged child adoption, where the Christian cannot pursue Ebonyi State traditional solution to childlessness that is hinged on polygyny, surrogate, sororate and levirate arrangements. It also recommended that child adoption should be carried out within the framework of “baby hatch,” to cater for the adoption triad.

6.2 Conclusion

Christianity and Igbo traditional religion both place utmost value on a consanguineous child. For instance, God in the Bible promised to give Abraham a birth child rather than Eliezer his servant whom he opted to adopt to inherit his wealth. Even Hagar, a surrogate woman could not give Abraham an acceptable heir. *Ikuchi Nwanyi* in Igbo tradition is levirate marriage and played out in the bible when Onan had intercourse with his late brother’s wife but died when he did not ejaculate inside her to avoid conception. Apparently, God was not pleased with him for that act but would have spared him if he had done otherwise, implicitly approving of Levirate practice in the old testament of the Christian Bible. Likewise Igbo traditional religion is patrilineal and autochthonous, transferring inheritance through the father figure that is traced by blood relationship. Therefore, where the

Ebonyi Christian is not convinced to adopt, he should feel free to follow his traditional religious convictions since it is not out of tune with the Christian bible.

However, because “unwanted” pregnancies must occur, the government should take up the running of the various aspects of child adoption, to give the society decorum, sanity and direction. Igbo Christians should feel free to adopt but within the legal framework, to give it legitimacy.

6. 3. Recommendations

1. Since religion and culture have been discovered to bear heavily on the choice and decision to adopt, the churches should present the option of child adoption as a way of answered prayers from God, at the face of infertility, even as sermons on faith for a birth child is preached, thereby giving child adoption, the accent of the Christian religion. By this, persons with lesser faith for a birth child perhaps due to advanced age or obvious medical complication will go home with the satisfaction that God has answered their prayers.

2. Relevant ministries of government in charge of child adoption should carry out awareness campaigns, educating the public about processes of child adoption intermittently, through the public media; both electronic and print. Such campaigns should also incorporate re-orientation on stigmatization that affects the adoption triad and negative cultural influences on child adoption. Such programmes when made interactive, through phone calls, will reveal fears that are entertained by prospective adopter and given proper response, that will allay them.

3. The activities of “baby factory” operators should be taken over by the government through the establishment of what is referred to in Poland and Germany as “baby hatch or baby window”, in Czech Republic as “baby box”, in Italy as “Life cradle”, in Sicily as “the wheel,”

in Japan as “baby post box,” in China as “baby safety island,” and in South Africa as “the hole in the wall,” among other names used in many countries (Cochrane et al, 2013). This hole or box is located at a secluded part of the government hospital, where teenagers who wish to abandon their babies can safely, without any confrontation or harassment from anybody, leave such babies for the relevant authorities to pick such children and within a time frame, give them out in adoption. Akin to baby factories, operators of the “box” will also be saddled with the job of taking in teenagers who wish to secretly stay indoors and have their babies, especially when they are willing to give them out in adoption. When properly managed with utmost confidentiality, the unit will serve as a modest but efficient source of adoption, a safe haven for teenagers and children that would have been abandoned. It should be made an independent unit of all Teaching Hospitals as Federal Government input in supporting child adoption. This unit will regulate adoption activities to ensure uniformity across the federation, review and research into adoption activities across the world in contrast to the practice in Nigeria. It will enforce adoption laws where they are breached and pursue other enlightenment campaigns aimed at promoting adoption in Nigeria, especially as culture of their host community affect adoption. In every state of the federation, a Federal teaching hospital exists, thereby making for a nationwide coverage of uniform adoption practice in Nigeria when they synergize and collaborate.

4. This will afford the Igbo Christian, who is resident in the northern states, the opportunity to adopt when he has need to. Even the Ebonyi Christian couple will be relieved of the various bureaucratic obstacles experienced while trying to adopt.

5. The elastic culture as Ugwueye *et al* (2015) calls it which Igboland is blessed with as institutional workable provision for dealing with the dilemma of child adoption should not be discarded where the Igbo Christian is not convinced to pursue child adoption as a solution for childlessness. Christians who opt for polygyny as a solution to childlessness should not be

tagged sinners because even the Bible acknowledged the patriarchs who were polygamous as friends of God. Levirate, sororate and surrogate arrangement are all traceable to the Christian bible. Traditionalisation of Christianity therefore should accommodate those doctrines that are precious to Africans and be conveniently preached from the bible, without exclusively depending on the western cultural dictates of individualism and monogamy

6. The clergy should find the various instances of child adoption cited in this work which Jesus Himself was among as practical basis for encouraging Childless couples to adopt where they can afford it. Also traditionalist who can afford to adopt should also apply their philanthropy to extend their magnanimity in adoption to children in need to be adopted.

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

There is the need for further research into the working modality of the “baby hatch”, and its peculiarity to our country’s social problems so that we do not go borrowing from others without adapting their solutions to our peculiar situation. The role of Motherless babies homes have been overtaken by cultural evolution that saw the emergence of baby factories. Moreover the children found in motherless baby’s homes are often unfit for adoption because, they have grown to know their adoptive status which no adopter will wish to inform the child as it alienates the child from the adoptive parents.

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APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

Research questions are those questions that the questionnaire intends to achieve. They include;

*What demographic data affect the decision to adopt?

*What psychological factors or fears of the infertile persons affect the decision to adopt?

*Do traditional beliefs or culture affect the decision to adopt, and how far?

*How far does Christianity among the Ebonyi people encourage or discourage child adoption?

*How much do the people know the legal requirements of agency adoption?

*How do traditional religious beliefs and Christian teachings foster dilemma experience in the minds of the infertile Ebonyi Christian couples?

APPENDIX II
LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

S/N	NAME	ADDRESS	AGE	INTERVIEW DATE
1	Mrs Mary Okeke	Ifite Awka Anambra State	36years	22/4/2017
2	Mrs Christy Agu	12 Nwabueze St. Emene Enugu	35years	4/4/2018
3	Mr C. Nwankwo	6 Eziowelle St. Abakaliki	45years	17/8/2018
4	Mr Ikenna Agumba	Ndiebor Ophoke, Isieke	40years	5/1/2018
5	Chief Ejinkeonye	Amagu Ikwo Ebonyi State	76years	4/8/2018
6	Chief Nzam Edeali	Ohatekwe Isieke Ebonyi State	65years	3/8/2018
7	Chief Okpaleke	23 Udensi St. Abakaliki	57years	4/8/2018
8	Prof. Ikechukwu Okodo	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka		3/8/2018
9	Mrs Arnold Atu	Ndiebor Ophoke Isieke, Ebonyi	45years	3/10/2017
10	Mr Fabian Ajulu	Agbaja Unuhu Izzi	52years	6/8/2018
11	Mrs Amaka Ononye	5 Nibo St. Abakaliki	51years	4/8/2018
12	Mrs Christiana Nzom	Onicha Igboeze Ebonyi State	57years	6/8/2018
13	Mr Ikenna Edozie	Ishiagu Ebonyi State	60years	5/8/2018
14	Mr George Ifenze	Ndiagu Igube Ohaukwu Ebonyi State	49years	3/8/2018
15	Mr Sunday Alike	Ndubia Ikwo Ebonyi State.	58years	7/8/2018
16	Mrs Mercy Nwodom	Nguzo Edda	42years	5/8/2018
17	Chief Cletus Otubo	Nkalagu Ebonyi State	67years	6/8/2018
18	Mr Friday Mbam	Ishiagu, Ivo	36years	4/8/2018
19	Evelyn Edeze	Amagu Izzi	32years	3/5/2018
20	Chief Nwiboko	Onuwambara Isieke Izzi	72years	2/4/2018
21	Mr Sunday Eme	Unwana Afikpo, Ebonyi State	41years	5/4/2018

22	Mrs Evelyn Nwangbo	Ndiagu Iyiogwe, Ohaukwu	37years	3/3/2018
23	Mrs Maria Nwogbodo	Onuebonyi Izzi	42years	5/8/2018
24	Mr Monday Mgbada	Oneke Ezza	37years	16/3/2017
25	Chief Simon Ngene	Amasiri	65years	3/6/2018
26	Mrs Felicia Nwonu	Ndubia Ikwo	38years	2/7/2018
27	Mr Sunday Alike	Ohatekwe Isieke	57years	7/8/2018
28	Mr Cletus Otubo	Amagu Izzi	45years	7/8/2018
29	Mr Friday Awam	Umuoghara Ezza	39years	7/8/2018
30	Mrs Evelyn Ejezie	Akpoha Ebonyiu State	43years	6/8/2018
31	Mrs Juliana Nwangbo	Ndiagu Igube Ohaukwu, Ebonyi	47years	4/5/2018
32	Mr Eme Emmanuel	Nkalagu	46years	4/5/2018
33	Chief Nwiboko	Iboko Izzi	73years	5/8/2018
34	Mr Ikechukwu Edeali	Ndiebor Isieke	32years	11/10/2017
35	Pst Ebenezer Ogechukwu	Ohaukwu	43years	5/4/2018