

## **Child Adoption: Exploration of its Benefits and Impacts on Adoptees and Adoptive Parents**

<sup>1</sup>Omeire, C. O.,<sup>2</sup> Omeire, E. U., <sup>1</sup>Ebubechukwu. C. V. and <sup>3</sup>Eboh, E. A.

<sup>1</sup>School of General Studies, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Directorate of General Studies, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria.

### **Abstract**

Child adoption has become a contemporary sociological matter in Nigeria. Once child adoption is effected and nurtured, it engenders latent and manifest consequences. The study examines the benefits and impacts of child adoption on adoptees and the adoptive parents. It is a library based research that did not involve field work. The study maintains that child adoption causes most adoptees to suffer grief arising from the loss of, and detachment from, a birth parent who may be alive, yet unavailable and perhaps unknown. The study further argues that child adoption, if not properly managed may adversely affect the identity development, self-esteem and mental health of adoptees. Regarding adoptive parents, the study submits that some, particularly those that are infertile, may suffer from post adoption depression swing and also experience intermittent feeling of being inadequate to parent a child. The study also identified possessiveness, uncertainty and concern regarding status of the adoptee as possible impact of child adoption on adoptive parents. The benefits of adoption were highlighted to include support for adoptive parents during old age and providing adoptees wings to fly and achieve their ambitions. The study recommends that given its benefits the Government and society should encourage child adoption and that potential adoptive parents should undergo counselling.

**Keywords:** Adoption, Adoptee, Adoptive, Child and Parent

### **Introduction**

Children are precious gifts to parents. The Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria captures the primacy of children with a saying which also serves as a name: *Nwa ka ego/Nwakaego* which means a child is of greater value than money. Based on this notion, the Igbo society holds that a marriage without children, particularly male, is unsuccessful. The conventional way of bringing children into a family is through sexual relationship between a husband and wife or a man and a woman. The other means is by child adoption. Child adoption is perceived differently in different societies (March, 1995; Wegar, 2000). As Ojo (2013) points out, child adoption entails the transfer of rights and duties from the birth parents to another who legally assumes the role of parents. Three entities are usually involved in the adoption enterprise. The first is the birth, biological or natural parent who gave birth to the child that is placed for adoption. The second and main subject is the child to be adopted, usually referred to as the adoptee. The third is the adoptive parents who become the legal parents of the adopted child. According to Cole and

Donley (1990) child adoption has three dimensions. First, it is a personal act. Second, it is a legal act. Third, it is a social service. As a personal act, it involves three sets of people viz, the birth parent, the adoptee and the adoptive parent. As a legal act, adoption is the avenue provided by law to create the legal relationship of parents and child between persons who are not related by birth. As a social service, through the agency of child adoption, a congenial family environment is provided for distressed and disadvantaged children.

The process of child adoption in many societies is rigorous and involving. The act of child adoption is convoluted with intrinsic and extrinsic layers. Once the process is legally sealed, the adoptee moves into a home that will shape his/her orientation, perspective and worldview for life. The focus of this work is not whether an adopted child is a tabular rasa to be filled with requisite values and knowledge from the adoptive environment or whether the child has innate potentials that will be enabled and guided to sprout and blossom. Omeire (2016) has appraised the issue of child adoption and the nature versus nurture dialectics. For the adoptive parents, the reality of child adoption can be physically challenging and emotionally tasking, considering the consequential adjustments emanating therefrom. How does child adoption affect the adopted child, intrinsically and extrinsically? How does adopting a child affect the psych-socio orientation of adoptive parents? Does child adoption serve any beneficial purpose either to the adoptive parents or the adoptee? These concerns are the major focus of the present work.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The rational choice theory provided the theoretical underpinning for this work. The highlights of the theory are presented below.

#### **Rational Choice Theory**

The rational choice theory was propounded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Cesare Beccaria. Other proponents of the theory include Adam Smith, Gary Becker, George Homans and James Coleman. The theory states that individuals or actors are purposive and goal-oriented. It further maintains that the actions of the actor are intentionally undertaken to achieve objectives that are consistent with the actor's preference hierarchy (Ritzer, 2008). In other words, the theory holds that individuals will always make rational, calculative, cautious and strategic decisions that promote their self-interest by maximizing their gain and minimizing their loss. Friedman and Hechter (1988) point out that in arriving at a particular decision, the rational actor must be guided by three elements viz: (a) scarcity of resources (b) opportunity cost and (c) social institutions.

Actors have different resources. For those with abundant resources, the achievement of ends may be easier than for those with few or no resources. Also in pursuing a particular end, an actor has to forgo another desirable action, this is more so if the available resources are insufficient to meet two attractive ends. A rational actor must also take cognizance of his environment and the institutions therein.

Child adoption does not take place in a vacuum. It also does not occur adventitiously or by serendipity. The decision to adopt a child is a very important one. It is usually preceded by a rational, well thought-out evaluation, due consultations and painstaking environmental impact

assessment of that decision. The potential adoptive parents may be limited by lack of resources which may be in form of money to prosecute the adoption or time to await the bureaucratic protocol and consequential delay associated with formal adoption. In Nigeria, for example, illegal adoption from baby factories cost up to five hundred thousand naira or more (Kupoluyi, 2014), while formal adoption may last beyond one year. There may also be other needs or projects competing for the scarce resources of the potential adoptive parent. The individual may be saving money to build a house, purchase a car or replenish certain household furniture.

Another important variable that may constrain the individual in the decision to adopt is the society, its institutions and processes. If after rational analysis the individual concludes that society will scorn him for adopting and discriminate against his adopted child, the person may refrain from pursuing child adoption. If on the other hand he rationally concludes that society and its institutions unreservedly accepts the adopted child and accords him the dignity, privileges, inheritance and legal rights extended to biological children, the potential adoptive parent is likely to proceed with adoption.

The rational choice theory which portrays the individual as a rational actor whose activities are influenced and circumscribed by society provides a suitable theoretical base for the work as it captures the social element of the work. Consequently, the theory was selected as the theoretical orientation for the study.

### **Types of Adoption**

It may be apt to consider the modes of adoption. In Nigeria, three types of adoption can be broadly identified, namely local, international and relative or kinship. Local adoption refers to the adoption that takes place within the country which can be intra-state or inter-state. As it relates to Nigeria, international adoption refers to adoption within Nigeria by Nigerians living abroad. This distinction is important because Nigeria does not allow foreigners to adopt Nigerian children. On finalization of the adoption process, adoptive parents are free to take the adoptees to the countries they reside as their children. Relative or kinship adoption relates to the adoption of children born by relations of the adoptive parents. Such birth parents may be deceased or in rare cases alive.

Globally, child adoption can be classified into any of the following: open, closed, agency, private, intra-state, inter-state, international, trans-racial, foster, kinship, special needs, step-parents and common law. Each of these types is briefly explained below.

Open adoption refers to an arrangement whereby provision is made for some kind of contact between the birth parents, the adoptive parents and the adoptee. According to Bernstein (2001) a merit of open adoption is that it eliminates the possibility of a stranger springing up in the future to lay claim on an adoptee since the biological parents of the child are known. With respect to closed adoption, there is no direct contact between the birth parents, the adoptive parents and the adoptee. A merit of closed adoption is that it significantly assures the adoptive parents that the adoptee will remain in the family since he or she does not know the biological parents. Agency adoption refers to adoption that is handled by an outfit that is licensed and legally authorized to secure children for interested and suitable adoptive parents who desire them. On its part, private adoption is usually arranged through a third party and such

intermediary could be a medical doctor, lawyer or clergy. In some states in America, private adoption which is also referred to as independent adoption is not allowed by law.

Kinship adoption, as earlier explained, takes place when a member of a person's extended family or relation adopts a child from that family. The reason for kinship adoption may range from parental death to health challenge of the child's parents or their financial incapacitation. Foster adoption is an arrangement whereby the Government places children in families where such children are treated as members of the household. Such willing families are usually paid stipends by the Government for the sustenance of the children. Foster parents may eventually decide to formally adopt any of the children under their care. According to Moore (1993) the major advantage of foster adoption is that the children are reared in normal family environment, rather than being institutionalized in an orphanage or any such home.

Intra-state adoption refers to those adoptions that take place within a state while inter-state adoption relates to the adoption in which the birth parents and the adopting parents reside in different states of the country. As Melosh (2002) points out both intra-state and inter-state adoptions are aspects of local or domestic adoption. In international adoption, the birth parents and the adoptive parents live in different countries. As reported by the Child Welfare Information Gateway (2017) in 2005 nearly 46,000 children were adopted worldwide, with Americans adopting half that number and by 2015 international adoption dropped to 12,000 with the majority being adopted by people from Italy and Spain. As the name implies, trans-racial adoption relates to the adoption of children from a race different from that of the adoptive parents. An example is when a white family adopts a black child or vice versa. This type of adoption can lead to a situation in which a black child may have a sibling that is white. This can occur if a couple has a child or children before embarking on the trans-racial adoption.

Step-parent adoption refers to a situation whereby a man decides to adopt the biological child of his wife born to another man before their marriage. Special needs adoption relates to the adoption of children who are challenged, disabled and thus have peculiar needs that require special care. Special needs children include those with challenges such as dyslexia, autism, hearing impairment, cleft lips etc. It takes a lot of empathy and compassion for people to adopt children with special needs. Common law adoption is a mutual arrangement whereby a parent allows their child to stay with a friend or relative for an agreed period of time. At the end of the agreed period of living together, which the public must have witnessed, the adoption is then considered binding in some courts, even when the initial agreement was not processed through the court. As Herman (2012) indicates, common law adoption is also referred to as private fostering in Britain. This may be because the state is not involved in the arrangement and the family where the child is living does not receive any allowance from Government.

### **Benefits of Adoption**

Does adopting a child confer any benefit either to the adoptive parents or the adoptees? This section will address that question.

## **Benefits for Adoptive Parents**

The following are some of the benefits of child adoption to adoptive parents.

### **Opportunity of Becoming Parents**

Through the agency of child adoption individuals and couples become parents to children they did not biologically beget. This is an immense benefit, particularly for couples that are infertile or have health challenges. Also men and women, who for one reason or the other did not marry but desire children they can call their own, have the opportunity of becoming parents through child adoption.

### **Platform for Obtaining Desired Gender**

Some parents have children of only the same gender. For example, a couple may have four males as their children while another family may have only females as their own children. Any of the above hypothetical families may decide to adopt a child of the opposite gender to complement the children it already has. Child adoption thus provides a convenient means for families with same gender children to bring children of the opposite sex to become bonafide members of such families.

### **Lineage Perpetuation**

In some cultures, male children are highly valued. As Isiugo-Abanihe (2003) indicates in Africa children, especially sons are celebrated as agents of continuity for the family name, a characteristic that encourages both polygyny and prolific child bearing to ensure that sons survive to perpetuate the lineage. In situations where couples do not have male children, adoption of males becomes the beneficial option to meet the cultural expectation, particularly in Africa, to ensure lineage perpetuation.

### **Support during Old Age**

Gardner (1998) indicates that child adoption serves as a means of ensuring care for adoptive parents in their old age. This is particularly pertinent in Africa where children are socialized to realize that they are obligated to cater for their parents when such parents grow old. This benefit becomes pronounced considering that most countries in Africa do not have Government funded social welfare programmes for the elderly. Also the pension systems in most of these countries are not efficient. Most old parents in Africa, thus, depend on their children for care and support. Child adoption, therefore, serves as an old age insurance policy for people who do not have their own biological children.

### **Scriptural Fulfilment**

Most religions enjoin their adherents to provide help to the deprived and hopeless. For example, Christians are commanded in James 1:27 to show love and care to orphans, widows and the vulnerable. Some Christians in obedience to the above scriptural injunction adopt special needs children, orphans and other disadvantaged children that require warmth, affection and care. Apart from Christians some other individuals altruistically undertake adoption mainly to provide homes for children deprived of parental care (Tizard, 1977). Those who adopt either

on religious or humanitarian ground are most likely to enjoy inner peace and contentment for lending a helping hand to the needy.

### **Pleasure of Having a Child from a Different Race**

The benefit for people who go for trans-racial adoption could derive from the pleasure of having a child from a different race. For those who have had biological children prior to the adoption, there could be the additional joy that their children will have siblings that are from a different race. Individuals from families with racial diversity are likely to be cultural relativists who will show consideration and tolerance in their relations with people from other cultures and races.

### **Means of Establishing and Consolidating Political Alliance**

Adoption serves as means of creating and consolidating political ties. This was more common in ancient times. According to Kirk (1985) ancient adoption, which usually involved adoption of adults, focused on the political and economic interest of the person adopting. Such adoption provided the legal tool that fortified political ties between prominent families and brought male heirs to manage estates. Benet (1998) reiterated this assertion by indicating that in ancient times, adoption was commonly used by the aristocrats. He further maintained that many of Rome's emperors, including the famous Emperor Trojan, were adopted sons. The adoptive parents thus benefitted politically from such adoptions.

### **Benefits for Adoptee**

The following are some of the benefits that the adopted child derives from child adoption.

#### **Prepared Place**

It may be apt to indicate that it is not everyone who applies for child adoption that succeeds in having a child. As Njoku (2005) points out in Imo State, Nigeria applicants for child adoption are expected to meet some criteria which include financial capacity, medical fitness, age, and emotional stability. Prior to the perfection of the adoption process through the issuance of adoption order, the prospective adoptive parents usually make necessary preparations to receive the child. Such arrangements may include purchase of baby wears, baby cots and beddings, feeding and toys. Provision could also be made for a babysitter. The adopted child, therefore, comes to a ready home that is prepared to receive him or her.

#### **Family of Love**

As Haralambos and Holborn (2008) point out the family is the pillar of society, the most remarkable of man's social institutions and the basic unit of social organization which undertakes the critical task of socializing children. The adopted child is brought to become part of a family which desired the child and took legal steps to make him or her a member of the family. The child is, therefore, showered with love and care. An adopted child is freed from regimentation in an institutionalized home with its deprivations and brought into an environment of filial affection. As Afam-Okwuosha (2019) indicates it is the responsibility of families to impart on children the values of honesty, humility, perseverance, responsibility and

courtesy. The adopted child, ushered into a loving family, is thus socialized to imbibe these values.

### **Wings to Fly**

An adopted child is brought to a family setting where he or she is given the opportunity to work hard and excel. The adopted child is assured of family resources and support to achieve his or her purpose in life. Without the agency of child adoption, the child may not be exposed to an environment to flourish and realize his or her dream. Adoption thus becomes like a propeller to push the child into becoming great in life. Many adopted children have by dint of fertile family environment, hard work and discipline achieved tremendous successes in life. Such individuals include Gerald Ford who rose to become the 38<sup>th</sup> President of America, Jesse Jackson, a priest and frontline African American civil rights activist, and John Lennon, a famous singer and songwriter.

### **Adoptive Privileges**

Through the instrumentality of adoption, an adopted child legally becomes an integral part of the adoptive family. As Nwaogugu (2004) points out, an adopted child is entitled to all the rights of biological children. Consequently, all the privileges enjoyed by biological children also apply to the adopted child. Such privileges include use of the adoptive parents' surname, partaking in the inheritance of the adoptive parents, appropriation of the status and social networks of the adoptive parents etc. According to Mahoney (2002:11) one of the benefits of child adoption is that it confers on the adoptee "the privilege to use the father's authority and power". Similarly, Ugwulebo and Omeire (2016) assert that people inherit social positions based on the family background, reputation and social placement of their parents and siblings. Without adoption, the adoptee would not have been able to enjoy the adoptive rights and privileges provided by the adoptive parents.

### **Protective Hedge**

The family serves as a social nest which provides cover, protection and security for its members. The father as the head of the family stands at the gate to ward off adversaries and predators while the mother and children que behind him to supply weapons, when needed, for the defence of the family. In times of crisis, the family also rallies round any member in distress and spares no effort until stability is restored. The adoptee, as a member of the family, enjoys the protective hedge, solidarity and security provided by the adoptive parents and siblings, where they exist.

### **Adoption Impact on Adoptees**

Adoption is a fundamental and live-changing experience to the adopted child. Adopted individuals have unique experiences that impact on their lives from time to time. Some of the impacts include:

## **Loss and Grief**

The unavailability of birth parents arising from adoption may propel the feeling of grief for many adoptees, especially for those adopted as grown children or adults. The loss experienced by adoptees has been characterized by Powell and Affifi (2005), as “ambiguous loss”. According to them, ambiguous loss is the loss of someone who still is, or who may be, alive. The feeling of loss may be aggravated by the fact that the adoptees may not easily find outlet for their grief because others may not understand or recognize the inner workings of their mind. The feelings of loss and grief, as well as anger, anxiety, or fear may especially occur during emotionally charged milestones such as marriage, the birth of a child, or the death of a parent. The adoptee may grieve that his biological parents are not available to partake in the joy or sorrow of that moment.

Adoptees may also suffer secondary losses arising from the loss of siblings, grand- parents, aunts, uncles, cousins etc. Those adopted as older children may suffer loss of friends, schools, neighbourhoods and familiar environment. In the case of international adoption, there may be loss of cultural affiliation and language development.

## **Identity Development**

As Grotevant (1977) points out, identity formation commences from childhood and assumes greater prominence during adolescence. Identity is a significant issue for adoptees even when they grow to become adults. The Evan Donaldson Adoption Institute (2009) maintains that the task of identity development for an adoptee may be complicated by issues arising from adoption such as the reason for his adoption, what became of the birth parents, does he have biological siblings, does he resemble the birth parents in looks and other features etc.

Penny, Borders and Portnoy (2007) have identified five phases in identity development by adult adoptees thus:

First, no awareness/denying awareness: In this situation the adoptee does not overtly acknowledge adoption issues. Second, emerging awareness: Here the adoptee views adoption as a positive influence and recognizes some issues, but he or she is not ready to explore these issues. Third, drowning in awareness: In this situation, the adoptee has feelings of loss, anger and sadness about the adoption. Fourth, re-emerging from awareness: In this case, the adoptee recognizes the issues related to the adoption, but also sees the positive aspects and is working towards acceptance. Finally, finding peace: Here the adoptee has introspected, examined and analyzed the whole gamut of issues surrounding his or her adoption and is moving towards peace and acceptance of the situation as the best possible option in the circumstance.

## **Self – Esteem**

Self-esteem refers to a person’s concept or notion of who he/she is and how the individual feels about himself/herself. Sharman, MacGue, and Benson (1996) conducted a research on the emotional and behavioural adjustment of American adopted adolescents. They reported that while adoptees are similar to non-adoptees in many respects, they score lower on measures of self-esteem and self-confidence. Borders, Penny and Portnoy (2000) in their study on “Adult Adoptees and their Friends...” corroborated the finding of Sharma et al on adoptees and self-



esteem. A pertinent question is what could be responsible for the general low self-esteem among adoptees. A possible explanation may be that some adoptees may perceive themselves as different, strangers and unwelcome or rejected in their adoptive families. Some of these feelings may stem from the initial loss of birth parents, biological siblings and kinsmen. Another explanation could be the inner feeling of being different from non-adopted persons who know about their genetic background and birth family and thus more secure about their own identity.

### **Mental Health**

As Baden and Wiley (2007) point out, there is lack of unanimity among scholars on whether the psychological well-being of adopted adults is significantly different from that of their non-adopted peers. Cubito and Obremski (2000) based on their research outcome indicate that there are higher rates of depression among adoptees than their non-adopted counterparts. Borders *et al* (2000) also agree with the findings of Cubito and Obremski. However, Felgeman (2005) reports that both adoptees and non-adopted individuals have similar levels of depression and similar rates of suicide ideation and attempts. This therefore suggests that the adoptees accepted their adoption status and adjusted favourably to it.

Despite the disparity in research outcome regarding the psychological well-being of adopted persons, most of the literature indicates that adopted adolescents and adults are more likely to receive counseling than their non-adopted peers. (Miller, Fan, Grotevant, Christensen, Coyl, & VanDulment, 2000; Borders *et al*, 2000). Furthermore, Yoon, Westermeyer, Warwick, and Kuskowski (2012) report that adoptees are at an increased risk of substance use disorders during their lifetime. The counselling sessions provide outlets for adoptees to ventilate and seek solution to the psycho-social challenges emanating from their status as adoptees. Those who successfully go through the counselling therapy are able to handle the challenges of adoption. Others who did not seek counselling or were unable to have their issues resolved through counselling, may resort to the use of drugs. This option has serious implications for crime.

It may be apt to point out that without prejudice to the general trends in the lives of adoptees highlighted in this section, each adoptee will have unique feelings, experiences and thoughts about his or her adoption. Some of these differences may be accounted for by individual personality traits, coping mechanism or other live events.

A question may arise as to whether the adoptees, who are unaware of their status as adopted children, would also experience the psychological feelings highlighted in this section. The answer is that they may not, based on the fact that they have assumed themselves to be the biological children of their adoptive parents. However, the effect would be more traumatic and devastating should the adoptees get to know, especially as adults and from outsiders that they were adopted and deceptively treated as biological children. It is, therefore, advisable that adoptive parents inform adoptees of their status early enough to enable them adjust accordingly.

## **Impact on Adoptive Parents**

Parenting generally is a thing of joy, with moments of stress (Ojukwu, 2013). Parenting adopted children is associated with certain unique challenges and experiences which may include:

### **Depression**

Shortly after the arrival of the new member of their family, most adoptive parents experience what Bond (1995) refers to as “Post Adoption Depression Syndrome” (PADS). As Foli (2009) points out, this depression which is triggered by the inability to meet the societal expectation of having one’s own biological child, is characterized by sadness, a feeling of being “let down” and frustration on the incapacity to biologically produce one’s own child. The responsibilities and tasks of parenting can be too much for some adoptive parents to effectively cope and this can lead to depression. Some may have difficulty bonding to the new child and may inwardly interrogate their parenting abilities. It is instructive to note that the post adoption depression swing can resolve on its own with the passage of time and as the adoptive parents begin to adjust to the realities and demands of their new roles (Foli, 2009). In cases where the depression persists, such parents are advised to seek counselling from appropriate experts.

### **Possessiveness**

The adoptive parent may overcome depressive swing and feeling of inadequacy and becomes inextricably attached to the adoptee. The adoptee becomes an object of excessive care, attention and affection. As a baby, the adoptee is provided with much more toys, clothing and food than are necessary. The possessiveness also manifests in restriction of access to the adopted child. Only thoroughly screened and trusted persons may be allowed to interact with the adoptee as a baby. The child is given the best affordable health care in the event of any slight indisposition. The adoptive parent, as manifestation of possessiveness acts as buffer to protect the adoptee from any adversary. This possessiveness may have the consequence of hindering the child’s personality development.

### **Identity and Attachment**

Adoption is a permanent event that alters the identity of both the adoptee and the adoptive parents. In some cases, the adoptive parents are slow to come to terms with, and adjust to their new identity or they wonder what expectations accompany the new identity. As Logan (1996) observes adoptive parents may be anxious that they do not “feel” like parents, even after adopting their child. They may even introspectively wonder if they are really entitled to the child. At other times, adoptive parents may question if they truly love the child enough. Also the lack of role models for adoptive parents may complicate their situation and cause them to develop a sense of isolation and “aloneness”.

The feelings of being a parent may evolve as the adoptive parents genuinely meet the child’s emotional and material needs. With the passage of time parents, are able to move beyond feelings of being “not worthy” or “not capable” of parenting their child, and become comfortable in their new role, recognizing and feeling fully entitled to parent their child.

## **Status of Child**

The adoptive parent may also be inwardly reflecting and agonizing as to whether the adopted child would be accepted by the biological siblings (where they exist), extended family members, friends, associates, significant others and society at large. There may also be feelings regarding whether the adoptive child would be stigmatized, mocked or embarrassed by the peers and school mates. The parent may also worry as to whether the adoptive child would be able to have the requisite confidence to withstand and overcome any unpleasant comment regarding his or her status as an adopted child.

In the western world where adoption has been long accepted as a normal practice, the above concern would not pose any problem. The same is not true in most African societies where child adoption is yet to be completely embraced (Omosun & Kofoworola, 2011; Nwaoga, 2013). However, the situation appears to be changing. For example, as reported by Omeire *et al* (2017) child adoption has become accepted in many communities in Igbo land. This acceptance may not be unconnected with the dynamism of the Igbo society, the influence of Christianity and globalization. As Giddens (1990) points out globalization undermines certainty and leads to constant review of certain assumptions, perceptions and knowledge.

## **Uncertainty**

This is the feeling that after investing so much love and resources on a child, the adoptee may decide to walk away. There may also be the apprehension that the birth parent may suddenly appear to lay claim on the child, despite the fact that the adoptee has bonded with the adoptive family. The feeling of uncertainty is more pronounced when the adoptive parents did not go through the legal process of child adoption.

## **Conclusion**

Child adoption when consummated can provoke volcano sized social rearrangement. It is domestically speaking, an epochal event that shapes the social formation of a family. The study x-rayed the social phenomenon of child adoption and analyzed its psychological cum social implications on two principal players in the adoption triad, namely adoptee and the adoptive parents. The rational choice theory which postulates that individuals use rational calculations to make decisions that promote their objectives and self-interest was adopted as theoretical framework. The study maintains that most adoptees encounter issues relating to loss and grief, identity development, self-esteem and mental health. With respect to the adoptive parents, the study argues that the impact ranges from depression, possessiveness to identity and attachment, status of child and uncertainty. The study maintains that child adoption is symbiotically beneficial to both adoptees and adoptive parents. It showed that adoption takes a child to a prepared place, a family of love with inbuilt protective hedge where the child is provided wings to soar as an eagle. Regarding adoptive parents, it was indicated that child adoption provides avenue for those who cannot, or do not want to, have biological children to have their own legal children in addition to serving as an old age insurance policy and means to perpetuate a lineage.

## Recommendations

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

- i. Considering its benefits to both the adopted child and the adoptive parents, child adoption should be encouraged by Government and society.
- ii. The mass media, traditional and religious leaders should amplify the benefits of child adoption and sensitize the people on its importance.
- iii. As a way of rendering religious and humanitarian service, individuals should be encouraged to adopt special needs children.
- iv. Adoptive parents should be made to go through counselling before the finalization of the adoption process. This will be with a view to, among other things, mitigating any negative impact of child adoption.
- v. Adopted children should be regarded as bonafide members of their respective communities and societies and should be accorded every right privilege enjoyed by biological children.

## References

- Afam-Okwuosha, N. (2019). *Making Your Marriage a Paradise on Earth*. Port Harcourt: Dordum Ventures
- Baden, A. and Wiley, O. (2007). Counselling Adopted Persons in Adulthood: Integrating Research and Practice. *The Counselling Psychologist*, 35, 868-901
- Benet, M. (1998). *The Character of Adoption* London: Jonathan Cape
- Bernstein, N. (2001). *The Lost Children of Wilder, The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care* New York: Pantheon Books.
- Bond, J. (1995). Post Adoption Depression Syndrome Roots and Wings (Spring Issue) 50-61.
- Borders, L. Penny, J. and Portnoy, F. (2000). Adult Adoptees and their Friends: Current Functioning and Psychological Well-Being. *Family Relations* 49, 407-418.
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (2017). International Adoption Retrieved on 20/4/2020 from <https://adoption.org/internationaladoption>
- Cole, E. and Donley, K. (1990). *History, Values and Placement Policy Issues in Adoption: The Psychology of Adoption* New York: Free Press
- Cubito, D. and Obremski, B. (2000). Psychological Adjustment in Adult Adoptees: Assessment of Distress, Depression and Anger. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70, 408-413

- Evan Donaldson Adoption Institute (2012). For the Records 11: An Examination of the History of Adult Adoptees Access to Original Birth Certificates Retrieved on 10/3/2020 from <http://www.adoptioninstitute.org>
- Felgeman, W. (2005). Are Adoptees at Increased Risk for Attempting Suicide? Suicide and Life-Threatening Behaviour 32, 206-216
- Foli, K. (2009). Depression in Adoptive Parents: A Model of Understanding through Grounded Theory Western. *Journal of Nursing Research*. 12, 120-128
- Friedman, D. and Hechter, M. (1988). The Contribution of Rational Theory to Macro-Sociological Research. *Sociologist Theory* 6, 201-218
- Gardener, J. (1998). Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life New York: Oxford University Press
- Giddens, A. (1990). How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives London: Routledge
- Grotevant, H. (1977). Coming to Terms with Adoption: The Construction of Identity from Adolescents into Adulthood *Adoption Quarterly* 1,3-27
- Haralambros and Holborn (2008). Sociology: Themes and Perspectives London: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd
- Herman, E. (2012). The Adoption History Project Oregon: University of Oregon Press
- Isiugo-Abanihe, U. (2003). Male Role and Responsibility in Fertility and Reproduction Health in Nigeria Lagos: Ababa Press Ltd
- Kirk, H. (1985). Adoptive Kinship: A Modern Institution in Need of Reform London: Allen Unwin
- Kupoluyi, A. (2014). Ending Baby Factory Menace The Nation Newspaper April 15,2014, 13
- Logan, J. (1996). Birth Mothers and their Mental Health; Uncharted Territory *Journal of Social Theory British Work* 26, 609-625
- Mahoney, R. (Ed) (2002). The Shephard's Staff Kilpauk: World Map
- March, K. (1995). Perception in Adoption as Social Stigma: Motivation for Research and Reunion. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57(3), 653-660
- Maxwell, J. (2007). Maxwell Leadership Bible Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers
- Melosh, B. (2002). Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Miller, B., Fan, X., Grotevant, H., Christensen, M., Coyl, D. and Van Dulment, M. (2000). Adopted Over Representations in Mental Health Counselling: Adoptees Problems or Parents Lower Threshold for Referral? *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 39, 1504-1511

- Moore, S. (1993). *Social Welfare Alive* London: Stanley Thornes Ltd
- Njoku, L. (2005). *Critical Review of Child Adoption Process in Imo State Project Submitted to the Faculty of Law, Imo State University, Owerri*
- Nwaoga, C. (2013). Socio-Religious Implications of Child Adoption in Igbo land, South Eastern Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4(13), 705-710
- Nwaogugu, E. (2004). *Family Law in Nigeria* Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books
- Ojo, I. (2013). *Adoption Practice in Nigeria* Journal of Law, Policy Globalization
- Ojukwu, M. (2013). *Influence of Mate Selection Preference on Marital Stability Among Married Persons in Abia State* Ph.D Dissertation, Unpublished Umudike: Michael Okpara University of Agriculture
- Omeire, C. (2016). Child Adoption and the Nature and Nurture Controversy: An Appraisal *Journal of Research in National Development* 14(1), 87-94
- Omeire, C., Iheriohanma, E., Osita-Njoku, A., Omeire, E. and Onoh, P. (2017). Empirical Investigation on the Practice and Acceptance of Child Adoption in Igbo land, South Eastern Nigeria. *FUTO Journal Series* 3(1), 77-87
- Omosun, A. and Kofoworola, O. (2011). Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Towards Child Adoption among Women Attending Infertility Clinics in Lagos State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine* 3(1), 58-67
- Penny, J., Borders, I. and Portnoy, F. (2007). Reconstruction of Adoption Issues: Delineation of Five Phases among Adult Adoptees. *Journal of Counselling and Development*.85(1), 30-41
- Powell, K. and Affifi, T. (2005). Uncertainty Management and Adoptees Ambiguous Loss of their Birth Parents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 22, 129-151.
- Sharma, A., McGue, M. and Benson, P. (1996). The Emotional and Behavioural Adjustment of United States Adopted: An Overview Children and Youth Services. *Review* 18(1/2), 83-100
- Ritzer, G. (2008). *Sociological Theory* New York: McGraw Hill
- Tizard, B. (1977). *Adoption: A Second Chance* London: Open Books
- Ugwulebo, E. and Omeire, C. (2016). *Family, Marriage, Kinship and Descent In Ugwulebo, E.Sociology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* Owerri: Cel Bez Publishing Co Ltd
- Wegar, K. (2000). Adoption, Family, Ideology and Social Stigma, Bias in Continuity Attitude, Adoption Research and Practice. *Journal of Family Relations* 49
- Yoon, G., Westerneyer, J., Warwick, M. and Kuskowski, M. (2012). Substance Use Disorders and Adoption: Findings from National Sample Retrieved on 13/4/2020 from [http:// pfosone.org/article/info963 Ado1962F101371962F](http://pfosone.org/article/info963Ado1962F101371962F)