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From humanitarianism to family building

Genres of security implications of child adoption as a management strategy for infertility

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Abstract

Purpose – Adoption practice is originally designed as a live-saving option for some category of children. In recent times, this purpose has been challenged by several social, biological and cultural exigencies. Hence, a notable morphing of the practice to satisfying adopters' need has been observed, however, requiring further interrogations. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected through sessions of interviews with six adoption officials (social workers), four orphanage managers, three legal practitioners and 13 prospective and successful adopters, across three selected states.

Findings – The study records contemporary adoption practices as mostly a management strategy for infertility by bringing to fore diverse narratives that reveal adoption as now primarily construed, subconsciously implemented and ultimately serving in many ways as the social security mechanism for adopters than for securing the children who are to be adopted.

Social implications – This by implication results in poor adoptive parent–child bonding, disservice and maltreatments in diverse ways.

Originality/value – This study heralds the "rebranded" security benefits of adoption and enlarges the scope and genres of social security implications of child adoption in the contemporary Nigerian society.

Keywords Security, Child adoption, Infertility management

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Child adoption is a practice designed to assure a life of stability and dignity for children whose parents are unwilling, or for one reason or the other, unable to care for them (Cardarello, 2009). Boswell (1988) in "Kindness of strangers" characterizes adoption of children as an act of compassion and humanitarianism. Over time and across spaces, child adoption has been generally construed as humanitarian effort to improve the fate of abandoned, exposed and generally, unwanted children (Triseliotis, 2000). The practice is also known to offer solace to the abused and neglected children whose welfare would have been imperiled, considering that they are severed from their biological homes. (Cretney and Massion, 1997). Although there have been varying historical accounts on the factors necessitating adoption of children, the practice notably performs various functions. Omusun and Odeyemi (2011) note that in the past adoption was designed to serve the interest of the adult and gave less emphasis to interest of the children. Carp (1998) posits that the remarkable difference between the old and modern systems of adoption lies in the different purposes it has served over time. In other words, the focus on children through the consideration and regard for their interest is the hallmark of modern-day child adoption and has paved the way for several legislations popularising and advancing this consideration.

At the heart of all legislations supporting child adoption is the need to provide security for children who are placed for adoption. These acts, in all of their considerations, favor the protection of all children who are to be adopted. History has it that Massachusetts Adoption of Children Act 1851 was the first adoption law passed in the USA. Prior to this adoption act,

a number of atrocities were committed against children; adoption of children was contractual and privately arranged and virtually no law existed to govern the termination or transfer of parental rights (Carp, 1998; Hermann, 2007). This situation provided birth parents with unmitigated power to sell or transfer parental rights. The passage of Adoption of Children Act brought about several changes and shift in legislative perspectives on child adoption (Herman, 2007). This structural shift placed about increased emphasis on the protection of adopted children with positive implications such as controlled children advertising, full children integration amounting to the provision of inheritance rights, same status as biological children and more supervision of child placements by local authorities (Triseliotis *et al.*, 1995).

In the words of Oladiji (2012), recognition of children came up in view of the fact that so many children are being denied opportunities for proper development, safe, secure and healthy environment. This recognition for children's survival and proper development have thus powered philosophical designs of many legal instruments that support the observation and popularization of the practice of child adoption across the globe. For instance, United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of children clearly states "The primary aim of adoption is to provide the child who cannot be cared for, by his or her own parents, in a permanent family […]." This usually is in view of child protection from all harms. Hence, the modern day adoption should be child centered. However, the burden of infertility in recent times, coupled with changes in what constitutes a family redirects these traditional security benefits of child adoption and places adult social security at the center while leaving children to be adopted at risk of some forms of insecurity.

The change in the conceptualisation of security has increasingly welcomed a different view of security and advancement over tradition boundary of its definition. The United Nations Development Program (1994) defines security as "freedom from fear and want." This definition has formed the basis of the conceptualisation of security, emphasizing people-centered aspect (Hough, 2004). Thus, human security conceptualisation now takes on a new shape of seeing individual as primary referent in the security discourses bordering on how to protect them and respond to their sources of threat. The broad array of what constitutes threat to humanity broadens the genre and sources of man's (in) security. People live and thrive within groups – family, religious setting, community and work place. By nature, individuals value and strive to retain their membership and spaces in a number of groups they belong. In achieving this, certain roles and expectations have to be fulfilled. For instance, infertility as a public health problem affects spousal, family and community relationships (Dyer *et al.*, 2002). In most traditional societies, childlessness places the sufferers, especially women, at risk of insecurity, economic deprivation, physical violence, social stigma, rejection, marital instability and several endless manifestations of violence (McQuillan *et al.*, 2003; CRFR, 2008; Unisa, 1999). Adopting children (since most societies operate a closed system of adoption) may help some to negotiate shame and manage the burden of infertility and secure their relationships and spaces within the groups they belong and in the society at large as well.

Few past studies (Oladokun *et al.*, 2009; Adewunmi *et al.*, 2012) mostly surveyed the opinions of people seeking fertility aids on adoption as a management strategy for their infertility. This work drew on a different method by interrogating identified prospective and successful adopters on their motive for opting for adoption. Since all but one adopter confirmed their option as an attempt to satisfy their fertility need, particularly in the society that places much value on fertility, it was necessary to further fill the gap in knowledge on the security implications of adoption as a management strategy for infertility. In another instance, the necessity was equally registered in deference to Bruce's (2011) position that altruistic adoption contributes to greater child welfare; family-building-driven adoption may likely not yield the same result, thereby placing child security at risk. By engaging adoption and security rhetoric, this study reveals that child adoption performs several security functions.

However, these functions, in most cases, have embraced notable changes in their primary reverent. These changes are made evident in adopters' rationale for opting for the practice as well as the placement considerations inter alia. It also highlights the implication of child adoption deployments as a management strategy for infertility.

Methodology

The study was conducted, using a semi-structure in-depth interview guide with orphanage managers (OM), adopters (AD) and legal practitioners (LP). These three categories of respondents were considered significant in the provision of relevant information to the subject matter. The interview guide contained questions that explored individual adopter's rationale for adopting, as well as different adoption official's observed reasons for which their clients came to adopt. Furthermore, effort was also made toward examining the congruence of placement strategies adopted with child security as well as diverse security functions of adoption as interpreted by the respondents. Data were gathered in three selected states in Southwestern Nigeria that are known to have a long-standing system of adoption. Recruitment of adopters was secured with the help of some magistrates of the court, and welfare officers who prior to the researcher's meeting with the adopters had secured the adopters' consent. Some other adopters were got through snowballing; adopters who were interviewed connected the researchers to other prospective and successful adopters that they knew. Adopters were met at times and places convenient for them. For the LP and OM, a purposive sampling technique was adopted; only managers of orphanages practicing child adoption were included in the study. Also, the LP involved in this study were those of magistrate/family courts presiding over child adoption matters.

All interviews were conducted in English, audio-taped, at the most convenient times and places suggested by the participants, after their consents had been duly granted through the contact persons. The broad research questions were:

RQ1. What factors are responsible for the low acceptability and concurrent high demand for child adoption?

RQ2. Are there security implications of these perceived paradox on the procedures and outcomes of child adoption?

To answer these research questions, specific questions were contained in the various interview guides that were designed for the different evaluative strands. For the adopters interview guide, these included: "How did you hear about child adoption? Could you please tell me why you chose to adopt? Why do you think adoption is necessary? Also, some of the questions raised for the social welfare officers were: "Why do you think most of your clients have come to adopt? How are child placements determined? What are the things you look out for to be convinced that the adoption is ordered in the best interest of children? Why is it necessary to consider adopter's preference? From your observation, what are the implications of considering adopters' preferences? Also, common questions to the OM and LP focused on observed irregularities within the system of adoption. These questions generated probes from where the reported themes were framed. Data gathering and transcriptions ran concurrently to disallow premature saturation. Data analysis was thematic.

Findings

The findings from this study are placed within a number of headings. It contains the narrative constructs of adopters' personal interest as against altruism, as a factor that fosters adoption demands. The analysis also foregrounds the implications of the shift from humanitarianism to family building as well as institutional methods promoting the shift in security referent of child adoption. Following these are conclusions from the inferences made.

The paradox of low acceptability and high demands for adoption: adopters' explanation for adopting

The low acceptability and yet high demand for adoption call for an understanding of the motives that drive the practice. Intending, prospective and successful adopters hold a significant place in the explanation of the factors that influence child adoption. An analysis of the factors influencing child adoption would provide a clue into adopters' explanatory model for the functions of adoption or provide us with adopters' level of the functionality and, hence, the value attached to the idea and entire practice of adoption. The analysis also provides explanation for the motive behind the act of adopting children, the consistency or digression of the adopters' motive from and likely implication of these on the manifest function (child security) of adoption.

Adopters interviewed provided reasons why they opted for adoption. For some, adoption was a choice that provided them with company after the demise of their husbands and relocation of their grown-up children. This option provided opportunity to have someone to send on errand and was found a coping strategy as young contemporary parents are averse to releasing their children to live with the grandparents (AD7). Majority of adopters situate their need for adoption within the need to manage their infertility: "I got married and stayed some time, and nothing was going on, after all the test and nothing was detected, I decided to adopt (AD1); "I have been married for over 15 years with no child: It has not been easy all these years; I have witnessed a lot of discrimination with people around me. So, we have just moved to our own house, I have decided to come to adopt" (AD3). Some of the adoption official's experiences also shed light on the reasons many opt for adoption:

> One woman came here for adoption, and I asked her, "Is it that you have not given birth before now or why are you coming to adopt"? And then she started yelling at me, "So if I don born before, I go come adopt pickin? (Would I be here to adopt a child if I have given birth to one?) I then reasoned that such a woman, if she has her child tomorrow, could neglect such child when she eventually has a biological one (OM1).

Many of the responses point to the fact that a majority of adopters deemed the steps they have taken as necessary either to overcome the stigma that accompanies infertility or to meet their morale need. A majority of the adopters consider adoption as a practice mainly useful for the management of infertility. Arguably, this notable shift is in most cases likely to interfere with the consideration of the best interest of the child.

From humanitarian to family-building: implication for child welfare and security

Many adopters who chose adoption for the purpose of family building as against mainly altruism are most likely to be concerned about some aesthetic values of these children. They may fail to adopt any child with a form of challenge or even return the child to the orphanage at the discovery of an ailment after the child has been adopted. Also, the values placed on these children are likely to change with events in the adopters' lives, for instance, in a situation where adopter later becomes fertile. Some respondents attested to this fact where clients returned children for a minute reason such as eye problem. During this process of rejection a number of abuses are recorded against children as a result of unsustain interest of adopters. Also, adopted children were sometimes accused of conveying ill-luck into their adoptive homes as some claimed since the child's presence in the home, their businesses stopped blossoming (LP1). In most cases of such accusations, the resultant effect is dissolution of the adoption; hence, children were returned to institutional home or withdrawn from the abusive adoptive family. Such stated cases provide a clue into the kind rejection a child is likely to suffer when requested by an adopter whose paramount intention is to satisfy the need to be called a parent. Providing the resultant effect of these rejections

on children, an orphanage manager discussed a case she was handling at the time of this interview:

> Recently, there was a child with a tiny hole in the heart and all the cardiologists we consulted affirmed that the hole was there but very insignificant and that this would not require a surgery to close but that with time, it would close. This child was proposed to five different families and they all rejected him. At the end of the day, the child was traumatised. Children are very perceptive; it comes to a point when they know rejection. It was even a doctor that called our attention to it that we were just traumatising the child (OM2).

Giving a candid opinion on why children could be rejected, an official blamed it on failure to ensure that prospective adopters are potential good parents who regardless of any challenge would stay to see the child through. According to the official, "If you get a good parent for the child, he/she would not say 'this child wants to kill me'" (OM1). "If it were to be their biological child, would they return the child back to God?" (SW3). This delineation as "good" parents may somewhat rest on adopter's motive for adopting and the value they have attached to children. When parents who go for adoption are more oriented toward family building or personal interest as against basic interest of the child, adoption may be dysfunctional. Under such condition, one might likely record a number of child rejection or adoption disruption/dissolution when intending adopters' motive or expectation for adopting is unmet.

For instance, children who were later found with one ailment or the other were often rejected and returned to the orphanages particularly when adopted by Nigerians. Ultimately, prospective adopters who reject children allotted to them on the basis of not meeting specific desire are not moved by altruism and may also reject any currently preferred child later in life. Such latter rejection may occur when an adopter finds an alternative such as giving birth to biological child, or the adopter may even relinquish such child on any ground such as behavioral deficit. Even where the rejection is not outright in the forms of disruption or dissolution, it could be demonstrated in abuses and all forms of maltreatments with grave effect on the child socially and psychologically.

In addition, there are also child welfare issues emanating from efforts toward satisfying adopters' preference, as well as conforming to legal prohibition of adopting a child of opposite sex. It is the case that a girl child is mostly requested because in most cases of single adoption, women, more often than men, are notably found to be single adopters for their natural ability to nurture children, since the adoption law does not allow for the adoption of opposite sex child. Adoption is in some cases a coping strategy adopted by most voluntary or involuntary singles and divorcees. However, regardless of the sex of single adopter, the motive behind adoption of this form is primarily to satisfy adopters. This has been argued by some as a threat, in some measures, to proper development of children growing within such environment. This argument is predicated on previous observation that such children are prone to wrong orientations about family values and ethos. For instance, an adoption official commented on the need to reconsider the idea of adopting a child to single parent, particularly a divorcee. She argues that:

> It is not good to allow single parents, particularly divorcees to adopt. Most of those single parents are not responsible. At the same time we should consider that it is not everybody that is fortunate about marriage. Some people are of marriageable age but are not married, and they want to do something that would make them happy. Even if they are divorced, the ministry should try to know the circumstances surrounding their divorce. A child brought up under such condition is likely to have some behavioral problems. Some women, when they are single, the kind of life they live is shameful. Some bring different kinds of men into the house, such a child may be thinking that is the normal way of life (SW2).

In this regard, a responsible parent is framed in terms of being able to secure nuptial stability. This suggestion appears laudable and, in particular, speaks to the demands of raising children within the boundaries of cultural normativity.

Beyond adopter's blame: institutional placement measures promoting the shift in the security referent of child adoption

The previous section provides explanation for how adopters' motivation to adopt is mostly self-centered, and consequently, negatively impacting some children who were adopted. This section extends the explanation by exploring how placement strategies adopted could advance adoption practices as one designed primarily to meet adopters' need while placing the child's security at risk.

Placement strategy adopted sometimes provides evidence of the morphing of adoption from placing primary consideration on the child to satisfy adult's interest. The provision made for disruption even after the child has been adopted provided such evidence. Children may be returned at the whim of their adopters as the bond that exists between them and their adopters is mostly defined by adopters' satisfaction and interest to continue in the relationship. Interestingly, when it comes to the financial requirement for the adoption of babies, many adoption officials have compared adoption to having children through natural birth. One of the officials in an interview posited "Service charge is less than N100,000 (approx. $300) which is more than what would be required in training up a child" (SW4). Such comparisons are even recorded among the adopters where they claim that the amount of official adoption charge is okay by them on the ground that they would also have spent a lot on medical charges, should they have had the child through natural birth. In fact, they say, "money cannot buy a child." However, this comparison where adoption is reminiscent of natural birth children does not extend to some very salient issues that suggest the "consideration of best interest of the child" such as establishing and sustaining a formidable bond between the adopter and the adoptive child:

> We have seen some people who came back after discovering one ailment or the other in the child. They say they cannot continue with the adoption; they would want to return the baby. So, we try to replace the baby. Some of these children suffer from mental retardation or are physically impaired, and the adopter would not be able to cope, so they return the baby (SW1).

The room provided for such rejection to take place does not only present a denial of the original goal of child adoption, but may also provide a ground for children's insecurity in the adoptive homes where they may be opened to several abuses and neglect. Also, with regard to giving room to preference in terms of demographic attributes, particularly age of the child, many children, for lack of willing adopter stay longer in the orphanages than their counterparts. This is a serious concern.

Social security genres of child adoption as a management strategy for infertility: sharing from the adopters' construct

The secret pursuit of adoption in recent times may be better explained by social stigma that accompanies infertility (since adopting is almost synonymous to infertility) than poor social acceptability of the practice. Many would likely not adopt for uncertainty that the act would offer a permanent solution to social stigma that accompanies their infertility than for reasons relating to poor public acceptability of the practice. Many adopters do not want their adoptive children to know they were adopted. Some adopters even move from their initial residence to keep the secret of adoption from neighbors and by extension, their adopted children, for fear of disloyalty to them when they are grown up (Zhang, 2006). All these are efforts taken toward securing acceptability within the family and the community.

In negotiating the stigma and in their quest for social inclusion and security, various ways are adopted to disguise their infertility. Adopters may choose to adopt children in a way difficult to trace the child as their non-biological children. Interviews with some successful adopters revealed many adopters are averse to disclosing the source of their adopted child. Some of the adopters go to any extent to achieve this nondisclosure.

Some adopters may choose to leave their vicinity while processing the adoption: "up till today, nobody in my family knows that the child was adopted; immediately I was sure that my request for a baby would be granted by the Ministry's adoption unit, I traveled out of the country […]. Till now, even my family members think that I was pregnant before leaving the country when I returned with the baby" (AD4). Also, some may relocate from their previous residence immediately after adoption: "I have witnessed a lot of discrimination with people around me. Now that we are moving to our own house where no one knows us, I have decided to come to adopt" (AD9).

Some simply did not disclose the exact source of the child: "when my mother in-law and some associates asked, we told them that we got the baby through Artificial Insemination" (AD6). Many of the adopters' responses to the questions regarding the source of their babies represented them no less than capable to reproduce afterwards, thereby leaving no trace to suspecting the origin of the adopted child, and this was suspected to be the reason for some intending adopters' insistence on the physical characteristics of a prospective adoptee: "Some would even want to have a child that looks like their husband"; "you know, when a child is dark and either of the adoptive parents is also dark, you may not be able to detect that he/she is not their biological child" (SW3). While aligning with Zhang (2001) that infertile couples are likely to adopt in response to old age security and labor concern, new evidence in the social security function of adoption advances beyond that posited by Zhang, to embrace securing adopters' acceptability and inclusion in the society.

In addition to the security functions of adoption are the important views of some infertile couples who later adopted. Adoption was submitted as securing conjugal bliss; stabilising and securing marital bonds, although, apparently, many would not accept an adopted child as they would a biological child. For instance, in a comprehensive US survey, respondents shared positive views on adoption but half of the same population submitted that adoption is not quite as good as having one's own child (Johnson, 2002). Such feeling of inferiority of adoption reportedly declined at the time the inertia to adopt was broken. A male adopter lent his voice to this. "May be as you are starting, you may be feeling like 'is it my child?'" "Once the baby comes in, the joy would be there" (AD2); "at first, having to come to terms with adopting was a challenge but later on, we faced the reality" (AD6). These evidenced that along the line, in the process of adoption or later on, adopters may face the reality and begin to think less of whatever inherent differences between having a child through adoption or biological means. More importantly, adoption reduces the grief borne by infertile couples, which usually brings tension between the two: "Since we started bonding, we have always been in different mood; we now have a feeling that we are having a baby. Adoption is very good. I would advise people to go into it. I have seen so many people that have adopted, they are now very relaxed. The tension in the homes has come down immediately" (AD2). Adopting children therefore was found as reducing the threat of marital dissolution.

In the same vein, some believed that opting for adoption provides a singular opportunity for women to secure their seats in their conjugal homes: "As a matter of fact, when it comes to adoption issues, it is very pressing on the women because it is assumed in almost all marriages that when there is no child, it is the woman's fault, the woman would want to better her marriage by having a child in it, meanwhile men always feel that they can have their child anytime, anywhere" (AD8). Such opinion is although somewhat rooted in patriarchal ideology that exonerates men from being considered as the source of infertility. However, opting for adoption reportedly provides relief that dissuades men and their "advisers" – close associates, friends and family members, from the option of remarrying.

Adoption helps some to evade the option of marrying another woman, which is usually prescribed to men in most traditional setting. Although remarrying in some cases was noted to provide opportunity for some to be biological parents, it was equally noted as not preferred to child adoption because of its attendant ill-consequences. Some noted that rather

than remarrying to have a child, child adoption guarantees more security of the marital union by avoiding disunity that characterizes most polygynous homes. An adopter noted "when you adopt, nobody would continue to tell the man, – go and remarry now." The problems remarrying even bring to homes coupled with the psychological effect are many (AD2). This was also reiterated by another adopter: "In the past, when you are looking for children, they would advise the man to marry second wife so that she would be giving birth. In recent times, some are now saying instead of bringing second wife that would bring division into your family, you should come through this way- adoption, and your family would be happy" (AD5).

Adoption as a management strategy for infertility was also noted as better than remarrying and therefore adopted by some religious groups in the way it helps secure bond with religious groups and activities. Choosing to adopt in place of remarrying was noted among some religious groups as a measure through which persons who suffer infertility could have a child they would call their own and still retain their purity and confidence to performance certain religious rituals. One of the adopters posits, "Even, to us Christians, when we say 'I do', it is believed it is till death do us part. I am a Catholic; there is no way my church would support that I marry two wives. It is impossible, no way! Once you do that, you stop communion. The best thing is to go for this adoption and enjoy your life. It is the same thing; a child is a child" (AD2).

Generally, intending adopters described adoption as performing various functions in satisfying their social, psychological and morale needs.

Discussion of findings

Individual motives for adopting or wanting to adopt reflect the need to satisfy some personal interests. These range from the need for morale support, securing conjugal bliss and spaces within social and religious groups, to serving as a management of infertility. None of the adopters unreservedly made reference to altruism, either as a primary or secondary motive, for adopting. The implication is a notable deviation from the original motive geared toward the best interest of the child to one aimed at satisfying adults' needs for family building and personal satisfaction. The finding is consistent with Omusun and Odeyemi's (2011) view that in recent times, infertility is the main reason parents seek to adopt children. This situation has notable adverse implication for how children are sought, and ultimately, on the goal of pursuing the interest of children adopted. For instance, diverse cases of child rejection and adoption disruption in the bid to comply with adopter's preferences negate conventional wisdom and principles supporting the adoption of children.

In negotiating the stigma, adopters design various means. For instance, adopters have a preferred age of the child to be adopted. Omusun and Odeyemi's (2011) study reveals 45 percent of the respondents would prefer to adopt newborn, younger than six months, while a fewer, 35.5 percent submitted that ages six months to two years were preferred. Likewise, a survey conducted by Zhang (2006) in China found that many adoptive parents did not want to reveal adoption information to outsiders; childless couples did not want to admit that they were infertile since infertility is a social stigma in the Chinese society. Consequently, the adopter is able to manage the conflict between the subjective experience of difference and social expectation of conformity as posited by Goffman (1963). This conflict produces social stigma that segregates an individual from the society and from himself/herself. For instance, an individual may likely consider himself/herself a deviant for failing to satisfy the societal expectation of childbearing. Therefore, most adopters opt for the practice in a manner that satisfies their cravings to meet this societal expectation.

Besides, the notion of preferences somewhat suggests that adoption now is more adult centered and focused on family building than humanitarian or kindness of a stranger. This results in an eventual difficulty in placing children above the ages preferred by

adopters who would want to disguise the adopted child as biological one. The opportunity for age preference given to adopters becomes problematic when one considers how it fuels the retention of some kinds of children in orphanages. Although orphanages were noted to have been effective in providing first aid to abandoned infants, they have recorded failures in terms of assuring the survival of children (Johnson, 2002), as a number of studies (Miller, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Spurr, 2005) have concluded that developmental concern, growth delays and many other medical problems are correlated with institutional living.

Issues of power and privileges also pervade adoption discourses. In most cases, prospective adoptive parents that are on the queue for adoption outnumber the available adoptable children (Elainec et al., 2012; Olufowobi, 2014; Awoyinfa, 2014). Under such conditions, spirited competitions are notable, particularly among those adopting either to fulfill gender parity or managing infertility. Also, the intercountry adoption as witnessed in some African countries defies the Hague principle of subsidiarity. The force of demand for intercountry adoption now increases as a response to a number of factors such as: decline in adoptable children in affluent countries, greater use of contraception, rise in population and poverty in developing countries (Humphrey and Humphrey, 1993). This sometimes leads to unjust removal of many children from their origin, even when there are a number willing and scrupulous adopters on queue in the origin countries, an act Mezmur (2009) sums as purported imperialistic practice. Goodwin (2006) also observes the market nature of child adoption that is based on race, gender, age of children, and how these marked the practices of baby valuing and all sorts of degradation of personhood.

Practical implications
The observed paradox of low acceptability and high demand for child adoption implies the act as not for altruistic purpose but as suitable to negotiate stigma that accompanies infertility, with implications on how adoption is contracted.

With the relaxed notion of what constitutes the family, and consequently, the formation of family through adoption, this study provides evidence that parent–child bonds in adoptive families may never be comparable to those through biological ties, as they may quickly be waned by unmet expectations and likely unforeseen challenges. However, the question of waned bond between the parents and child in adoptive family comes to being with the increasing substitution of child security purpose of adoption with the need, in most cases, to negotiate the subjective experience of difference of many adopters who do not have their own biological children. These experiences of difference prompt most infertile adopters to make possible attempts to securing their spaces in many groups and relationships that they belong to in the society.

Also, the study revealed that the protracted stay of some children in institutional homes is no longer mainly caused by poor social attitude toward child adoption *per se* but by adopter's desirability of certain physical, demographical traits or aesthetic values attached to children in orphanages. The desire for these is mainly sponsored by the intending adopters' need to negotiate their infertile status. Hence, in most cases, people who opt for adoption for the purpose of managing infertility device every means, including age-preference measures to hide the fact from others, even their close relatives. This supplication to adopters' age-preference produces unintended dysfunctional consequences in advancing the rejection of some children, as well as promoting adoption disruptions and dissolutions.

The fact is people who adopt to manage their infertility reportedly hold reservations for post-adoption checks; they want to be left with the children without interference, as the case is with natural parenting. This in some ways interferes with necessary post-adoption investigations. A recent study (Onayemi and Aderinto, 2017) within the study locality revealed difficulties in ensuring child protection, given the poorly monitored pre-placement home study that should be conducted by officials. They also observed that the legal and

social regime on adoption of children might be an impediment to ensuring safeguards of children to be adopted, particularly in a society where adoption is framed as the reserve of the infertile. Social and legal terrains supporting a close system of adoption aim at protecting the images of all parties involved in adoption; however, the need to "protect the image" invariably positions adoption as odd, and anomalous, hence, the requiring secrecy. Interactions with the system of adoption revealed the deployment of this closed system rhetoric as a pretext to officials' inclination not to share useful research information that might aid the safety of children involved in child adoption. Meanwhile, the welfare of children in adoption would only be guaranteed by increased transparency and ensuring reliable information sharing (Smolin, 2006). Hence, there is need for a new outlook to child adoption. This outlook must present adoption as primarily humanitarian in its approach, execution and practice.

Furthermore, as raised by some adoption officials, raising a child within an environment that sets she/he in conflict with the prevailing cultural norms may present such a child with a precarious future. This is on the ground that exposure to such conditions has tendency to impair the child's worldview, leading to conceiving such socially unacceptable way of life as normal. The fact is, the society has evolved through diverse stages, with implications on the daily ordering of social life. For instance, the standard family model that constitutes the father, mother and children is undergoing changes in its configurations. The bond or filiation is achieved through other means apart from the principle of sexual reproduction. There are debates on the equal rights of the homosexuals, divorced, single parents to adoption. The supporters of equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation, in achieving their family configuration through adoption claimed that allowing such would ease prejudices against some categories (Santos et al., 2018). However, in the consideration of rights, the rights of children remain paramount (CRA, 2003; CRC, 1989; Hague, 1993). The idea of consideration of right calls for seeing the children differently, as never appendages or belongings of the adult who may want to adopt them. In other words, the decision as regards the placement of children should be in deference to the range of rights and privileges that must be accorded to the children, rather than the predilection or proclivities and interests of the intending adopters. There is, however, arguments clouding the idea of any influence of adoptive parents' sexual orientations on children. This argument on the influence of parents' sexual orientation on children lacks adequate empirical report. (Santos et al., 2018). This therefore suggests the need for further research quest in the area.

Ultimately, this study validates the supposition that survival and well-being of the abandoned child through adoption could only be assured when the adopted child ascends to a position indistinguishable from that of a birth child. The attainment of such status by adopted children is however difficult and mostly contended by the morphing of adoption motives from altruism/humanitarianism to satisfying various intending adopters' needs. As the motives tend toward management of infertility or adopters' centeredness, there is a concomitant implication on adoption security function. Although the original purpose of child adoption that focuses on children may not have been absolutely displaced, the increasing use of the practice as a management strategy for infertility threatens children's security in many ways and produces dysfunctional consequences on the security of the adopted children while serving multiple social security functions to the adopters.

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