

Child Adoption in Delta State: Sources and Motivations

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Abstract

The study investigated sources and motivational factors influencing child adoption in Delta State. The population of the study was made up of legal practitioners, social workers, nurses, doctors and teachers. Appropriate samples were randomly drawn from each group. The instrument for the study was 5-points Likert Scale questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using mean. The major findings of the study included seven (7) factors which motivated people to adopt children in Delta state and six (6) sources of children adoption. Recommendations include that people should adopt children only from legalized places.

Keywords: Adoption, Child, Factors, Influence, Motivation

Introduction

Children have traditionally been regarded as the fulfillment of marriage and assurance of the survival of the society (Moore 1993). Schaeter and Iamm (1999) maintained that children sometimes assume adult responsibilities by replacing dying members. Children are also seen as great companies in the family as well as taking care of their aged parents. All these roles of children in the family and the society are crucial for the survival of the

family. Many marriages are however characterized by childlessness. Increasingly, there are couples who remain childless at the end of their reproductive lives and this poses enormous challenges to the couples. Otoide (1999) reported that childless couples are under intense social and cultural pressure to reproduce. Infertility is a cause of immense psychological and emotional trauma especially for the women involved. Studies in south-west Nigeria have shown that it is a

cause of marital disharmony, divorce and social ostracism for women (Okonofua, Harris, Odebiyi, Kare, & Snow, 1997). Consequently, those that are childless often seek ways of becoming parents. One of such ways is the adoption of children.

It has been observed in the Nigeria society, that childlessness is one of the major problems that could face families. It could lead to conflict, fighting, constant dispute and even divorce. According to Leavenworth, Hendricks, Hurriman and Marelore (1991), when couples want children but cannot have their own, adoption offers one way to create a family.

In Nigeria, according to Okonofua *et al* 1997 and Otoide (1999), child abandonment, unwanted pregnancies and babies from orphanage homes provide sources for child adoption. Otide reported further that another source for child adoption is through arrangement. This was done between a college female student who did not want to abort a pregnancy and some families contacted child adoption agency within their locality. Some well-spirited individuals have gone into adoption on sympathy grounds. Another source of adoption may possibly result from situation of child abuse or neglect. Ekong (1999) reported that other sources of adoption may be through levitated

marriage, 'female husband' and relative adoption.

In Delta State, there are about 620 cases of infertility and numerous cases of unmarried teenage pregnancies, child abandonment, rejection and dumping, child abuse and neglect between January 2000 to 2005 (Ministry of information and Women Affairs and Children Development Asaba, Delta State, 2006). The problem of infertility has made many couples childless. It has resulted in serious instability in marriages and families. Their action has led to separation, divorce, hatred, quarrel, fighting and disharmony in most childless homes. In some cases, couples are unable to give birth to a particular sex or number of children they wish to have which also becomes a problem in the family. In all these and related cases, couples or individuals often resort to child adoption. Studies on adoption are necessary so as to ensure that the acceptable practices are followed.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to investigate sources and motivational factors influencing child's adoption in Delta State. Specifically the study:

- 1.identified the sources from which people adopt children in Delta State.

2. determined factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State.

Research Method

Area of study: The study covered three communities in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta state. These communities are Abraka, Eku and Igun. It is area where child adoption is common.

Design of study: The design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. This was used to obtain information about sources and child motivational factors influencing child adoption in Delta State.

Population for the study: The population of the study was made up of legal practitioners, social workers, teachers, nurses, doctors and adoptive parents. This was made up of 500,000 in size.

Sample for the study: A simple random sampling was used in the selection of 450 respondents from the population. These were made up of 46 legal practitioners, 74 social workers, 180 secondary school

teachers (100 females and 80 males), 25 medical professionals (doctors and nurses) and 125 adoptive parents. Information on and contact of the adoptive parents were obtained from Ministry of Women Affairs, Asaba, Delta State.

Instrument for data collection: The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. It consists of 24 items used to elicit information relevant to the issues under investigation. It was validated and its reliability coefficient established at 0.75.

Data collection and analysis techniques: The 450 questionnaires were administered to the respondents through personal contact by the researcher with the aid of five trained research assistants. Three hundred and fifty one (78%) questionnaires were completed and returned while 99 copies (22%) of the questionnaire were not retrieved. The data collected were analyzed using mean.

A. Findings of the Study: Findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Sources from which adoption of children is done in Delta State.

S/N	Sources from where children are adopted	Mean score (x)	Remark
1.	Motherless babies home	4.8	S
2.	Single girls who have unwanted babies	2.2	NS
3.	Indigent (poor) relations	2.0	NS
4.	The abandoned babies in the streets/gutter	2.4	NS
5.	Orphanage homes	4.0	S
6.	Government social/welfare centers	3.7	S
7.	The public	2.3	NS

8.	Broken homes	2.4	NS
9.	Private hospitals	2.0	NS
10.	Families with poor background	2.5	NS
11.	Churches/religious organization	3.5	S
12.	Non-governmental organization	2.4	S
13.	Government hospitals	2.4	S
14.	Special child adoption syndicates	3.6	S

Source: Field survey 2006. S (Source), NS (Not a Source)

Table 1 shows the sources or places where children could be adopted from Delta State. The mean ratings presented in table 1 shows that item 1,5,6,11,13 and 14 are sources for children adopting because they fall above the criterion mean of 2.50 while item 2,3,4,7,8,9 and 12 are not sources for children adoption because they fall below the criterion mean of 2.50. The result of the

analysis in Table 1 implies that there are many places where children or potential children for adoption could be found but there are only few legalized places where they could be adopted.

B. The factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State. Findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State.

S/N	Factors that motivate people to adopt children	Mean score (x)	Remarks
1.	To make up for childlessness.	4.6	M.F
2.	To make up for a particular sex.	3.8	M.F
3.	To make up for the number of children desired.	2.4	N.M.F
4.	To help the less privileged in the society or orphanage homes.	2.4	M.F
5.	To bring joy into the family during old age.	3.5	M.F
6.	To reduce or remove loneliness from couples which children are grown up and out of home.	3.5	M.F
7.	To get an heir.	3.7	M.F
8.	To sustain the family lineage.	3.8	M.F
9.	To raise couples luck of having their own biological children.	4.2	M.F
10.	To make the family complete.	2.4	N.M.F

Table 2 shows the factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State. The mean rating presented in table 2 shows that item

1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9 in the table falls above the criterion mean of 2.50 as the factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State while

item 3, 4 and 10 in the table fall below the criterion mean of 2.50, therefore they are not factors that motivate people to adopt children in Delta State. The result in table 2 implies that for any parent to adopt a child, some factors must have motivated them to do so.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study show that there are many places where children for adoption could be found but there are only few major and legal places where they could be adopted. The places are the motherless babies' home, orphanages, government social/welfare centres, special child adoption syndicates, government hospitals, churches and other religious bodies. This is in line with Okorofua et al (1997) and Otoide (1999), that child abandonment, unwanted pregnancies and babies from orphanage home provide sources for child adoption therefore affirming the motherless babies and orphanage homes as sources of child adoption. Source for child adoption is also through arrangement with some families' contract child adoption agency within their location.

Findings further revealed seven major factors that motivate couples to adopt children in Delta State. These include: making up for childlessness, looking for a particular sex, bringing joy into the family during old age, reduction or removal

of loneliness from couples, having own children, sustenance of family lineage and getting an heir. Making up for childlessness as a factor for child adoption converges with the view of Otoide (1999).

Raising couples chances of having own children as a motivational factor for child adoption is in line with Leavenworth, Hendricks, Gay, Hurriman and Mardona (1991). They concluded that when couples want children but cannot have their own, adoption offers some way to create a family. Also in affirmation with Ekong (1999), he observed that one of the reasons why people adopt is to afford couples who are yet unable to reproduce their own biological children the opportunity of being parents.

Sustaining the family lineage as a motivational factor for child adoption is in agreement with Ekong (1999) that couples adopt children to provide a home, family and lineage to an otherwise abandoned parentless child. This altruistic posture is often exhibited by couples who may have lost their own biological children.

Getting an heir as a motivational factor for child adoption is in line with Ekong (1999). He observed that to enable unmarried persons raise heir(s) or people who inherit their estates at their demise, unite a few persons in the industrialized societies in particular postpones

marriages until it becomes late, others for psychological or health reasons cannot get into marriage and so at the twilight of their lives, they would adopt someone who will inherit them.

Conclusion

The study has shown that are major factors influencing child's adoption in Delta State. When couples want children but cannot have their own, adoption offer one way to create a family. Child adoption is so widely recognized that it can be characterized as almost world-wide institution with historical roots traceable into antiquity. These are to make up for childlessness among couples, quest for a particular sex and sustenance of the family lineage. There are procedures and places of adoption of children such as the motherless babies' homes, orphanage homes, government social/welfare centres, special child adoption syndicates, government hospitals and churches/religious organization. In all cases of adoption, it must be for the best interest of the child, the adoptive parents must gain parental responsibility for the child whom they are expected to support completely.

Recommendations

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

1. People should adopt children only from legalized places to create standard and make the process more effective, standardized and authentic.
2. Couple going for adoption should be financially ready to take care of the adopted child.
3. Couple should seek appropriate advice and go through the necessary information, procedure and requirements before going for adoption.

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