

A phenomenological study to assess the opinions of infertile women regarding child adoption in south-western Nigeria

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Abstract: Background: Infertility remains a global health challenge with devastating psycho-social consequences in many African communities. Nigeria's rate of infertility is as high as 30%. Child adoption, although usually perceived as the last option for couples with incurable infertility, is associated with several physical, psychological, emotional and ethical issues. These issues have been linked to low acceptance of child adoption among infertile couples. The broad objective of this study was to assess the opinions of infertile women regarding child adoption in South-western Nigeria.

Methods: This study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design. A purposive sampling technique with a criterion sampling strategy was used to select ten (10) infertile women and a focus group structured interview was utilized to collect data from the participants. The demographic data of participants were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version fifteen and the results were presented as a table. The Giorgi's method of analysing qualitative studies was used to analyse the data on opinions of infertile couples.

Result: From the findings of this study, none of the participants had ever practiced child adoption, meanwhile, Child adoption was viewed as a good thing to do, though attitudinal disposition varied. Participants were of the opinion that child adoption brings joy into the lives of the couple especially those who are yet to have children, though they stated that the society does not accept it but adoption was seen as a way of contributing to the life of an individual as well as make the couple fulfilled.

Conclusion: The findings of this study revealed that there is need for strong advocacy, enlightenment and community mobilization for improved awareness and utilization of adoption services, and improve uptake of adoption as an alternative treatment for infertility.

Keywords: Adoption, infertility, opinion, women.

I. Background Of Study

Child Adoption is a procedure by which people legally assume the role of parents for a person who is not their biological child. Adopted children become full members of their adopted family and have the same legal status as biological children (Sklar, Steven, & Wasserman, 2009). Although recent advances in reproductive technologies are helping more couples than ever before to achieve their procreative goals but the successful outcome of the treatment would depend on the aetiological factors for infertility, available diagnostic tools, skills of the attending physician and above all the financial status of the couple. Despite availability of the above technology, a significant proportion of couples who have incurable infertility may need child adoption as the only option for becoming parents (Ezugwu, 2002). Okonofua (2003) found out that many infertile couples are cautious of choosing adoption as a way of resolving infertility because of cultural factors like disclosure and the non-specific provisions for adoption in the Nigeria legal system.

Infertility is a common health problem with devastating consequences on the affected couples (Oladokun, Arulogun, Oladokun, Imran & Bello, 2009). Adoption which may serve as an alternative strategy for the affected couples by reducing the effect of childlessness is not widely practiced in Nigeria (Oladokun et al, 2009). In recent years, there have been significant advances in infertility management including greater availability of donor insemination, in-vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer, gamete intra-fallopian transfer, zygote intra-fallopian transfer and intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection, among others (Cooke, 2000). Despite these advances, many infertile couples eventually do not achieve pregnancy (Kemeter&Fiegl, 2008).

Infertile couples are therefore left to suffer from the agony of childbearing failure which is manifested in form of emotional disturbances, depressive illness and marital disharmony (Oladokun et al, 2009). This study intends to assess the opinions of selected infertile women regarding child adoption as an option for coping with infertility.

The major reasons for not wanting to adopt a child according to Ezugwu (2002) includes: adoption not a solution to their infertility (84 out of 279 respondents); adoption was psychologically unacceptable (78 respondents); fear of unknown parental background (75 respondents) and abnormal behaviour in the child (75 respondents). Almost all respondents (96.7%) knew what infertility was a trend that was found across gender.

In the same study by (Ezugwu, 2002), the main sources of information in order of magnitude included health workers, print and electronic media and friends. On knowledge of any legal framework on adoption, only 47.8% were aware and could say correctly what the law says while awareness of the existence of adoption services was lower as only 39.2% were aware and 2.5% were not sure (Ezugwu, 2002).

Child adoption has been associated with several controversial ethical issues such as the physical (Cederblad, Hook, Irhammar & Mercke, 2000; Miller & Hendrie, 2000), mental health and development of the adoptees, racial/ethnic identity issues (Friedlander, 2009), pre-adoptive genetic testing, (Freundlich, 2008), openness versus secrecy in the adoption process and parenting problems (Zaki, 2000). They are more turbulent for women in western countries who opt for international adoption. From the present study, the problem areas for Nigerian women who may be willing to adopt children include husband's opposition and the unwillingness of the majority of them to entertain questions about the source of the baby (Ezugwu, 2002).

Indeed, adoption has been found to help ameliorate the negative impact of infertility (Fleckenstein, 2007) and can afford couples and their children the "potential for transformation and rebirth" (Bartholet, 2000). Couples must deal with the "structural factors inherent in the adoption process itself" (Daly, 2005, p. 34) and with the power imbalance between themselves and the physicians and adoption agency personnel to whom they turn for help in becoming parents.

Acceptance level of adoption in Nigeria

Opinions of respondents were sought on acceptability of adoption as a treatment for infertility. About 33.1% of the respondents were affirmative that adoption was an option while 49.5% said No and 17.4% were not sure. When asked of their personal willingness to uptake adoption if the need arise, 50.8% said they would not, 44.2% said they would while 5.0% were not sure. Reasons offered for non-uptake of adoption by those who would not access the service, were uncertainty about what the child's will be later in life, his/her pedigree is unknown, outright sentiment for not being a biological child and the child might decide to trace the biological parent later in life (Ezugwu 2002). Although, the meaning and implications of child adoption is known respondents are not willing to access the service. This may be connected with the cultural setting where the study is carried. Adoption in southwest Nigeria is not common. What is prevalent is fostering where a couple takes up children of members of the family and bring them up as theirs (Ezugwu, 2002).

Attitude towards adoption in Nigeria

Aghanwa, Dare, and Ogunniyi (2008) enumerated that infertile Nigerian women are more negatively disposed to child adoption than fertile women. The unfavourable disposition of the majority 69.3% of the respondents towards adoption in the study of Ezugwu (2002), was therefore not surprising. The finding is similar to available evidence from France and the Netherlands (De Monleon, 2000; Van Balen, Verdurmen & Ketting, 2007)., where despite a substantial development for several years, adoption remains seen as an unnatural phenomenon, which cannot replace a biological relationship and which is usually chosen as a last resort. It is clear that Nigerian respondents who were not favourably disposed to child adoption perceived it as no solution to infertility or as an acceptance of defeat or had a fear of some sort. It is probable that if they had been better informed, the proportion showing a favourable attitude to adoption might have been greater than the 30.7% recorded in the present study (Ezugwu, 2002).

Studies showed that the factors that may make an infertile Nigerian woman accept child adoption as a treatment option for infertility are similar to those of an American woman. Factors such as previous orthodox specialist treatment, tubal infertility, no living child and maternal age greater than 35 years (Chandra, Abma, Maza & Bachraeh, 2000; Ezugwu, 2002) are common to both. For example, those with tubal disease who might have had failed tubal surgery and/or in-vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer and who may have been informed by their gynaecologist that the only remaining options are childlessness and child adoption are more likely to know the correct meaning of adoption. A gynaecologist, after exhausting all treatment options, will usually offer adoption as the last option as explained above (Ezugwu, 2002).

According to Daniluk (2000), each couple realized that no matter how hard they tried, or how much time, money, or energy they expended in the pursuit of medical treatment, they were not likely to achieve their goals of producing a child. This realization engendered feelings of grief over the many losses associated with not being able to produce a child-grief that was shared by both members of each couple to varying degrees, but which generally seemed to be more intense and debilitating for the women. Several couples felt a need to formally acknowledge the loss of their own biological child(-ren) often through a ritual before they could move on to consider parenting an adopted child. Others struggled to know how to bring closure to their loss (Daniluk, et al, 2003).

When faced with the reality of having to adopt to create a family, another overarching theme for all the participants (are we reporting the findings here or it is from the findings of another study related to the present study), even those who were "absolutely certain" that this was "the right thing for them," was an intense sense of

fear. Couples found themselves having to confront all their biases, beliefs, and assumptions about the kind of women who relinquish their children for adoption and the importance of nature over nurture in the healthy development of a child. Many questioned whether they could love a child who was not genetically related to them and whether this love would be as deep and enduring as the love they expected to have for their own biological progeny. They worried about whether they were up to the challenge of dealing with any genetic or serious health problems an adopted child might have. They feared that a birth mother would not select them and worried about the extent of openness a birth mother might insist on before relinquishing her child to them. The women in particular worried about their ability to cope if, after a child was placed in their home, the birth mother changed her mind and wanted the child back (Daniluk, 2001). As one participant reflected, "If they went through all that and had to give the baby back, she would be absolutely devastated!" Couples also expressed concern about whether an adopted child would eventually reject them later in life in favour of their birth parents.

Culture and Adoption

Choice of adoption can be influenced by the culture. Oladokun, et al, (2009) narrated that people in the community have some thought about adoption. A participant said that sometimes a person who wants to adopt a child would want to do that because there is an ulterior motive to use the child for something else. Also, it was said that people living beside the person who adopts a child may not have a good attitude towards them. The other group said that adoption is "taking such a child from frying pan to fire because the environment is not conducive as the community is a local area" and that "it is hard to take such a child as if the child is one's biological child." Another part of the male group said they disliked adoption because they have not taken care of their own children not to talk of another person's child. Also some participants verbalized that some people believe that an adopted child is a bastard and such children would destroy their homes (Oladokun, et al, 2009). The Yoruba culturally believe that, "a child usually attracts yet to be borne children to come to the physical realm" was widely expressed by all the focus group participants.

On acceptability, the participants said that adoption was not acceptable in their community. According to them, they believe in having their own biological children." Other reason was that Yoruba's believe that such a child is "a bastard and that with time the child will ask for his biological parents" (Oladokun, et al, 2009).

A myriad of factors militating against the adoption process were enumerated. Topping the list was Yoruba cultural belief, followed by attitude of health workers, poverty, and non-acceptance by the family of husband or wife who would prefer their son or daughter marrying another person rather than adopt a child as well as disagreement between couples (Oladokun, et al, 2009).

Several problems were envisaged in the process of adoption. These include opposition to adoption by one of the couples, negative history of the child belonging to government, extended family problem because the child can never be accepted and can make the couple to divorce each other, long procedure in the adoption process, stress from government as couple may have to travel out of their station, fear of what people will say and finally lack of enlightenment on child adoption (Oladokun, et al, 2009).

Olatunji, and Sule-Odu,(2009) reiterated that both men and women perceive infertility in women to be caused by evil spirits, ancestral curses and promiscuity while the cause of infertility in men is perceived to be the result of psychosexual disorders. Infertility in this community has severe health and social implications especially for the women. Cultural beliefs come in various forms and the cumulative effect of these beliefs is a set of taboos and norms whose counteracting effect results in the perception and implication of infertility (Larsen, 2000). The consequences of infertility are more profound in women as compared to men (Inhorn, 1994). Fertility and potency are often thought to be synonymous (Olatunji,&Sule-Odu, 2009).It is generally believed that men cannot be infertile so far as he can sustain an erection.

According to Ezugwu, (2002), if a man cannot father a child, a male member of the family can always assist him in doing so. This is done in the western countries and it is called surrogate motherhood or fatherhood as the case may be. Having a child is clearly more important than loyalty to one's spouse, which is evidenced by the common practice of divorce because of childlessness. The findings are in keeping with other qualitative and quantitative studies which indicate an overwhelmingly negative implication of the inability to procreate (Kemeter & Fiegl, 2008).

II. METHODS

This study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design. The lived experience with regards to attitude and acceptance of child adoption was studied to come up with themes from data gathered from the subjects. It utilized a Focus group structured interview. The study was carried out among 10 infertile women at a Christian institution in south-western Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique with a criterion sampling strategy was used. In this case, women who have been married for more than 2 years and have experienced childlessness for over 2 years at one time were selected to the study. A total of ten married women were used for this research study. The demographic data of participants were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) version fifteen and the results were presented as a table. The Giorgi's method of analysing qualitative studies was used to analyse the data on attitude and acceptance of infertile couples. This involves the description of the meaning of the experience with reference to attitude and acceptance of child adoption by identifying the essential themes from the participant's responses. These themes were then pooled together and integrated into a common one. Thereafter, there was generation of concepts for ease of organizing the presentation of the study findings.

III. Results

Demographic data

Section A: Table 1

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity:		
Yoruba	4	40
Ibo	5	50
Others	1	10
Total:	10	100
Educational level:		
Tertiary certificate	10	100
Total:	10	100
Number of children:		
None	3	30
1-2	7	70
Total:	10	100

From the table above, 4 of the respondents were Yoruba, 5 of the respondents were Igbos while 1 of the respondent was from a different tribe. 10 of the respondents have tertiary certificates. 3 of the respondents have not had children at all, while 7 of the respondents have had 1-2 children but have experienced infertility for more than two years at a point in time.

Section B:

Concept of child adoption

The concept of child adoption is viewed as a good thing to do, especially if there is a need to help someone and it brings joys into the lives of the couple, especially those who are yet to have children, as long as the couples mutually agree to adopt a child. However, child adoption is a phenomenon that the society we live in do not accept and it can bring with it unpleasant feeling.

Time when a childless couple can consider child adoption

Child adoption can be considered by a childless couple after all medical efforts prove abortive, when the woman is becoming advanced in age or a defect in any of the couple's reproductive organ is diagnosed. However, it depends on the couple, their mental disposition and maturity in coping with emotions.

The kind of couple that can opt for child adoption

Couples who should opt for adoption includes any couple either with child or without child, who feel there is a need of it, are healthy, responsible and have adequate resources to cater for the child and also those who have been medically diagnosed of inability to produce children. It should be seen as a way of helping the society.

Problems faced by childless couples as far as child adoption is concerned

A great number of problems were mentioned which include; financial constraints of couples, fear of biological parent returning to claim the child, too much bureaucracy routine at office level, stigma in the community tagging the child as an adopted child, spouse acceptance, poor knowledge of the community on child adoption.

Process of child adoption

The process is viewed as cumbersome, expensive, tortuous and very technical. However, it is not known by many.

Societal perception on child adoption

Societal perception is negative, wicked, selfish, inconsiderate, and traumatizing as the society is ill-disposed to it and sees it as a strange idea; also couples who opt for it are viewed as faithless. However, it is

improving and becoming widely acceptable unlike before and in an enlightened society, it is accepted and viewed as a way by which childless couples can have their own kids.

Benefits of child adoption

The benefits include: positive contribution into the child's life, having the joy of parenthood and feeling of fulfilment seeing the child grow, it covers the shame that comes with childlessness, the parents will have someone to take care of them in old age and the presence of an adopted child can welcome the birth of a biological child in the home. Child adoption is said to contribute to the development, progress and peace of the society.

Ways the community can support child adoption

These includes: educating and creating awareness in the community through organizing seminars, workshops and government participation, provision of financial help and community participation in the process and acceptance of child adoption. However, the community should understand that it is not in one's power to bear children, the period of waiting is stressful and that child adoption is strictly the couple's decision.

Section C

Acceptance of child adoption

Child adoption can be accepted as an option for coping with childlessness, which depends on the decision of the couple after proper information, has been sought about it. However, it is not seen as a perfect solution to childlessness.

Concerns about the child to be adopted

Such concerns includes: the kind of parent that gave birth to the child, family background of the child, genetic make-up of child, would the child become a deviant in future, the reason the child was put up for adoption, if they have their own children how will they handle the children without sowing hatred among them. However, when a couple decides to adopt, they should be willing to accept the child.

Role of religion in acceptance of child adoption

The role of religion supports the acceptance of child adoption, as it is a way of raising hope to the affected couple, and that God can bless such couples through such means as they have loved an adopted child and by that, bless them with their own child. It is seen as a way of helping humanity. However, it can also not to be encouraging as it has no biblical backing and thus making it a decision for the couple to make.

Reaction of relatives towards child adoption

The reaction of the relatives might discourage and affect the couple's acceptance of child adoption as they are yet to come to terms with the idea of child adoption and see it as a taboo. However, the relatives have no role in the acceptance of child adoption as long as the couple accepts the idea and are satisfied with the decision of adopting.

Possibility of loving an adopted child as a biological child

It is possible to love an adopted child as a biological child as long as the child is of good behaviour, and children are gifts from God, thus whether biological or adopted every child should be nurtured and taught in the right direction. However, it depends on the individuals, the child and the reason for adoption.

Barriers affecting acceptance of child adoption

Barriers identified includes: spouse acceptance, finding the right child, fear of the unknown (what if they can't cater for the child), cultural beliefs and values, attitude of immediate family, inadequate knowledge or wrong perception about child adoption, lack of adequate resources, failure of child adoption process. However an adopted child cannot replace a biological child.

Data Analysis 2

The responses of the couples to what they feel about accepting child adoption as an option for coping with childlessness was extracted and presented below in their own exact words:

Woman A's Response

Woman A described her feeling towards accepting child adoption as follows "somehow and in some homes, people are beginning to accept the fact that accepting child adoption can go a very long way in mending broken heart that childlessness may cause". According to couple A, "instead of childlessness to wreck and consume couples, I feel accepting child adoption is ok, as long as such a couple is well informed about what they are into and can cope with the challenges".

Woman B's Response

Woman B explains that it "is not the option but occasion B calls for it the person doesn't have choice than to adopt, am not accepting the concept".

Woman C's Response

Woman C stated that "child adoption is an excellent idea".

Woman D's Response

Woman D explains that "No mixed feelings". That "it only depends on the decision of the couple and the gender they prefer". She further explained that "once a child grows and accept them, so why the rejection".

Woman E's Response

Couple E stated that "it is an option but it is not the perfect solution".

Woman F's Response

Woman F said that "it is not bad at all", "some people hypothetically say it is an act of unbelief but it is not. She said "I think it is rather an act of hope, faith and consideration for others".

Woman G's Response

Woman G stated that "I strongly accept child adoption and feel positive about it".

Woman H, I, and J's Response

Woman H, I and J gave no response to the question.

IV. Discussion

Research question 1 asked what kind of attitude do selected participants have towards child adoption as an option for coping with infertility. From the findings in this study, child adoption was viewed as a good thing to do, though attitudinal disposition varied, it was said to bring joy into the lives of the couple especially those who are yet to have children, though they stated that the society does not accept it but adoption was seen as a way of contributing to the life of an individual as well as make the couple fulfilled. Therefore participants have a good attitude towards child adoption among as an option for coping with infertility.

A striking finding of this study is that at the turn of this new century, and despite greater social acceptance of a diversity of family forms and a good attitude towards child adoption, as it can bring joy and fulfilment into the lives of the couple, it still seems to be a "stigmatized" family form as most couples gave their opinion about societal perception as "negative, selfish and traumatizing". This finding is in tandem with the Araoye (2003) study, that child adoption is not a popular alternative to infertility among Nigerians

In Nigeria, there is abundant evidence that the option of child adoption is yet to be fully explored in those that have incurable infertility because of their belief that an adopted child cannot fully replace the position of their own biological child. Previous studies have reported similar finding among womenfolk with higher aversion among the infertile group. This position may be due to general cultural stance that marriage without procreation cannot be regarded as being blissful (Oladokun et al, 2009). From the findings of this study, child adoption is viewed as a good idea yet it is also stated that an adopted child cannot replace a biological child.

Findings from this study, shows that the factors that may make an infertile couple accept child adoption as a treatment option for infertility are similar to those of an American. As found in the American study Chandra et al, (1999), and also Ezugwu, (2002), these include previous orthodox specialist treatment, tubal infertility, no living child and maternal age greater than 35 years. Two additional factors found in this study include the mental disposition and maturity in coping with emotions of the couples.

The couples in Sandelowski et al,(2007), study, reported difficulty with maintaining their energy levels and optimism as the waiting process wore on. They coped by trying to maintain some balance in their lives and relationships and by turning to friends and family members for support. Findings from this study also have majority reporting how cumbersome, expensive, tortuous and technical the process of child adoption is.

From the study of Ezugwu, (2002), the problem areas for Nigerian women who may be willing to adopt children include husband's opposition and the unwillingness of the majority of them to entertain questions about the source of the baby, this correlates with findings from this study. Additional problems mentioned include financial constraints of the couples, fear of biological parent returning to claim the child, too much bureaucracy routine at office level.

The participants in the study by Ezugwu, (2002), were not conversant with the components of the adoption process; this is similar to findings in this study as most women did not respond to questions asked about the adoption process, while few expressed how cumbersome, tortuous and demanding the adoption process is. The findings on the societal perception towards child adoption in this study, seems to correlate with Oladokun, et al, (2009), in whose study, the respondents gave various negative societal perception about child adoption as it is seen as a strange idea, and it is not encouraging.

Though several benefits of adoption were mentioned in this study it correlates with Oladokun, et al, (2009), which mentioned; temporary consolation for childless couple so that they will not feel lonely or feel the impact of being childless; it can bring good luck to the family because the child can become great in future, additional benefits include; positive contribution into the child's life, and its contributes to the peace and development of the society as it helps prevent prostitution or thuggery which is similar to the life lived by such children who have no one to care for them.

Though it is reported by Ezugwu, (2002), that Nigerian respondents were not favourably disposed to child adoption and perceived it as no solution to infertility or as an acceptance of coping with infertility. However, it seems times are changing as findings in this study revealed a good attitude and acceptance level of child adoption by majority of the couples as an option for coping with infertility.

Research question 2 asked if selected infertile women accept child adoption as an option for coping with infertility. Majority of the participants said child adoption was a good idea, and they have a positive feeling towards it, and strongly accept it as long as the couples involved mutually decide to opt for child adoption, as it can help mend broken heart and wreck, that childlessness may cause, though it was accepted, it was not seen as a perfect solution to it. Therefore, adoption is perceived as acceptable among these women.

In contrast to western countries where child adoption is a very well-established practice with many adoption agencies ready to assist willing couples, the practice of adoption is at its infancy in most developing countries, including Nigeria where religious organisations fill the role of adoption agencies, the rejection of adoption has also been reported elsewhere for religious reasons (Oladokun et al, 2009), however, from the findings of this study, the role of religion is encouraging and helps to raise hope for the affected couple, though it is also said not to have any biblical backing and thus making it a decision for the couples to make.

A factor mentioned to be a barrier to accepting child adoption was the financial demands of fending for the child at the family's expense. This is a reflection of the poverty level in Nigeria as most children suffered from this by dropping-out of school and this may catalyse into other anti-social behaviour. The burden of child upbringing is enormous and it may generate an internal conflict that might be difficult to resolve because of the notion that an adopted child could be claimed back by his/her biological parents. Other fears expressed were the possibility of the community tagging the child 'bastards' and likelihood of anti-social behaviour.

The major reasons for not wanting to adopt a child as studied by Ezugwu (2002), includes: adoption not a solution to their infertility (84 respondents); adoption was psychologically unacceptable (78 respondents); fear of unknown parental background (75 respondents) and abnormal behaviour in the child (75 respondents). This finding is closely related to that found in this study and most of the problems faced by couples as far as child adoption is concerned are the same as that written above.

In recent years, information on child adoption has become more plentiful, with substantial contributions from demographers and scholars in related disciplines. It has social and economic benefit such as, helping to reduce the negative impact of infertility, contributing positively to the life of the adopted child, and promote the change that occur in the family life cycle allowing couples move into the next stage of development and thus becoming a family as they make a transition to parenthood from adoption.

V. Summary And Conclusion

This research deals with the opinions regarding child adoption among selected infertile women as an option for coping with infertility. The findings of this study are important, on many different levels, in contributing to an understanding of the experiences of infertile couples. Although none of the women in this study had experienced adoption, however, most were opinion leaders within their community and this can provides the strengths that could be harnessed for policy implementation including mobilization of their community. These influential individual may be used as vanguards of positive disposition towards child adoption services. Based on these findings there is need for strong advocacy, enlightenment and community mobilization for improved awareness and utilization of adoption services, and improve uptake of adoption as an alternative treatment for infertility.

Recommendation

From the findings of this research, assessing the viability of adoptive parenting, clients may benefit from talking with other couples who have created their families through adoption, attending seminars and pre-adoption courses and familiarizing themselves with some of the self-help literature for couples who are considering adoption.

The importance of emphasizing support for couples during this difficult time is also recommended. The findings of the current study also suggest that clinicians can help couples cope with the waiting and with their equivocal parental status by having them consider and recommit to the important goals and activities that they suspended while waiting to become parents (e.g., making a career change, returning to school, pursuing artistic and creative interests, participating in volunteer activities). Also, given the toll taken on their relationship through years of infertility treatments, couples can be encouraged to engage in activities that are mutually satisfying.

It is important to reinforce the fact that the time and energy couples spend investing in their relationship will provide a more solid basis on which they can build their future together as parents when their adoption efforts succeed. Healthcare workers and Counsellors can help couples assess their personal sources of support and encourage them to access this support during this time.

Creation of awareness through media and proper education to provide information to the community about child adoption and other benefits was suggested. In this connection, there is a need for the establishment of adoption agencies, which are currently lacking in many developing countries including Nigeria. The Nigerian experience was compared and contrasted with the experiences of other countries. Factors associated with a favourable attitude to adoption, especially when the probability of cure of infertility is small, child adoption as a treatment option should be offered early so that willing couples can initiate the processes of adoption. This is especially important in developing countries where there are many children for adoption.

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