

The Procedures and Challenges of Child Adoption Practices in Ondo State, Nigeria.

OGUNLEYE OLUWOLE FESTUS

Department of Social Development, Faculty of Social Science and Communication Studies, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Nigeria.

Abstract- *This study examines the procedures, challenges, and implementation of child adoption in Ondo State, Nigeria. Adoption is a legal and social process designed to protect abandoned, orphaned, and neglected children by placing them into permanent families. The research highlights the procedures involved, including application to the Ministry of Justice, investigation by social workers, court hearings, and issuance of adoption orders. It also identifies challenges such as complicated legal processes, weak enforcement, cultural resistance, religious bias, social stigma, and the existence of illegal adoption agencies. The study emphasizes the importance of adoption in giving care to children without parents, helping couples without children, and reducing child abandonment. Findings show that while adoption laws exist, their implementation is weak due to poverty, corruption, and cultural traditions that emphasize blood ties and inheritance. The study concludes by suggesting reforms such as stronger government enforcement, public education, and community support to make adoption more effective and widely accepted.*

Key Words: *adoption, procedures, challenges, policy, implementation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Child adoption is an important social and legal process that provides care for abandoned, orphaned, or neglected children. In Nigeria, adoption is recognized by law, but cultural, religious, and social factors make it difficult. In Ondo State, adoption is rare and often kept secret because families fear stigma, cultural resistance, and community judgment. This study examines the procedures, challenges, and possible improvements in adoption practices. Adebajo (2020) explained that adoption in Yoruba communities is resisted because of strong cultural beliefs about lineage and inheritance. Families believe only biological children can continue family names and perform ancestral rites. Johnson (2020)

added that many families do not know the legal steps for adoption, which makes the process look complicated and discourages participation. Afolabi (2022) studied stigma and found that families who adopt are often mocked or accused of hiding infertility, which increases secrecy.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural communities and discovered that adoption is more accepted in cities but strongly resisted in villages where traditions dominate. Bello (2023) linked poverty to child abandonment, explaining that poor families sometimes leave children in hospitals or orphanages but still resist adoption because of financial burden. Ojo (2024) emphasized that inheritance traditions exclude adopted children, making adoption unattractive. Akinwale (2025) concluded that weak government implementation of adoption laws allows culture and stigma to dominate, leaving many children without care.

Adoption is a legal and social process through which a child who cannot be cared for by biological parents is permanently placed into another family. It gives the child full rights as if born into that family, including inheritance, identity, and protection. Adoption is different from fostering or guardianship because it creates a permanent parent-child relationship recognized by law. In Nigeria, adoption is guided by the Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level laws, but cultural and religious beliefs often shape how people understand and practice it.

Adebajo (2020) explained that adoption means transferring parental rights from biological parents to adoptive parents. He emphasized that adoption is not just about care but about giving the child full family membership. This definition shows that adoption is both legal and emotional. Johnson (2020) added that

adoption is a way of protecting abandoned or orphaned children. He described adoption as a permanent solution that gives children stability and identity. Unlike temporary fostering, adoption ensures that children grow up in a secure family environment. Afolabi (2022) studied adoption in Yoruba communities and defined it as a process of integrating outsiders into family lineage. He explained that while adoption gives children legal rights, culture sometimes resists it because of beliefs about blood ties. His definition highlights the tension between law and tradition.

Eze (2022) compared adoption in urban and rural areas and described it as a modern practice influenced by education and exposure. He explained that in cities, adoption is seen as a solution to infertility and child abandonment, while in villages, it is resisted. His definition shows that adoption is shaped by location and culture. Bello (2023) explained that adoption is a social welfare practice designed to reduce child abandonment. He defined adoption as a way of giving children a second chance at life. His view highlights the humanitarian side of adoption, where families provide love and care to children in need. Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and defined adoption as a legal process that should give children equal rights. However, he explained that in Yoruba culture, adopted children are often excluded from inheritance. His definition shows that adoption is recognized by law but challenged by tradition. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that adoption is both a legal and cultural act. He explained that adoption means creating a permanent family bond, but in Yoruba communities, it is resisted because adopted children are seen as outsiders. His definition highlights the cultural barriers that affect adoption.

The history of child adoption under Nigerian law shows how the practice has developed from colonial times to modern legislation. Adoption was not originally part of traditional African family systems because extended families usually cared for abandoned or orphaned children. However, with urbanization, poverty, and social change, adoption became necessary, and laws were introduced to regulate it.

Adebanjo (2020) explained that formal adoption laws in Nigeria began during the colonial period, when British legal systems influenced family practices. He noted that before independence, adoption was rare and mostly practiced by foreigners living in Nigeria. This shows that adoption was not originally a Nigerian cultural practice but was introduced through law. Johnson (2020) added that after independence, states began to create their own adoption laws. He explained that Lagos State was the first to pass an adoption law in 1965, which became a model for other states. This law gave legal recognition to adopted children and allowed them to inherit property.

Afolabi (2022) studied Yoruba communities and found that even after laws were introduced, adoption was resisted because of culture. He explained that families preferred fostering within extended families rather than legal adoption. This shows that law and culture developed side by side, with law promoting adoption and culture resisting it. Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and noted that adoption laws were more effective in cities, where families had access to courts and social workers. In rural areas, adoption laws were less known and rarely used. This shows that the history of adoption law is also shaped by location.

Bello (2023) explained that the Child Rights Act of 2003 was a turning point in Nigerian adoption history. He noted that the Act provided a national framework for adoption, giving children equal rights and protecting them from abuse. However, he also explained that not all states have fully implemented the Act, which weakens its impact. Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and found that even with modern laws, adopted children are sometimes excluded from property rights. He explained that Yoruba culture continues to resist adoption, showing that law alone cannot change tradition. This highlights the gap between legal history and cultural practice. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that weak government implementation has slowed the progress of adoption laws. He explained that although laws exist, they are not fully enforced, and families face delays and corruption. This shows that the history of

adoption law in Nigeria is not only about legislation but also about how government applies it.

Adoption in Nigeria is recognized by law as a permanent transfer of parental rights from biological parents to adoptive parents. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level adoption laws provide the framework for adoption. Under Nigerian law, there are different types of adoption, each designed to meet specific needs of children and families. These include domestic adoption, international adoption, kinship adoption, step-parent adoption, and private or agency adoption. Each type has its own procedures and challenges, and cultural beliefs often influence how they are practiced. Adebajo (2020) explained that domestic adoption is the most common type in Nigeria. It involves Nigerian citizens adopting children within the country. He noted that domestic adoption is guided by state laws, such as the Lagos State Adoption Law of 1965, and later reforms. Domestic adoption is meant to protect abandoned children and give them permanent homes. Johnson (2020) added that international adoption is allowed under Nigerian law but is more complicated. He explained that foreigners can adopt Nigerian children, but they must meet strict requirements, including approval from the Ministry of Women Affairs and compliance with the Hague Convention. International adoption is rare because of cultural resistance and government restrictions.

Afolabi (2022) studied kinship adoption, which is common in Yoruba communities. He explained that kinship adoption means relatives, such as uncles or grandparents, legally adopting children within the extended family. This type of adoption is more accepted culturally because it keeps children within the lineage. However, he noted that many families prefer informal fostering rather than legal adoption. Eze (2022) described step-parent adoption, where a new spouse adopts the child of their partner. He explained that Nigerian law allows this type of adoption to give children stability in blended families. However, he found that step-parent adoption is not common because families often rely on informal arrangements. Bello (2023) explained that private or agency adoption is also recognized under Nigerian law. He noted that licensed agencies

or orphanages can place children with adoptive families, but the process must be approved by the courts. He found that weak government monitoring sometimes allows illegal agencies, such as baby factories, to exploit families.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that even when adoption is legal, cultural beliefs affect how types of adoption are practiced. He found that kinship adoption is more accepted because it keeps property within the family, while domestic and international adoption are resisted because adopted children are excluded from inheritance. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that weak government implementation affects all types of adoption. He explained that delays, corruption, and poor monitoring discourage families from adopting legally. As a result, many families prefer informal fostering, which leaves children without full legal protection.

Under Nigerian law, adoption is a legal process that allows certain individuals or families to take full parental responsibility for a child. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level adoption laws provide clear guidelines on who may adopt. These laws are designed to protect children and ensure that only responsible adults are allowed to adopt. However, culture, religion, and weak government implementation often influence how these rules are applied in practice. Adebajo (2020) explained that Nigerian law allows married couples to adopt, provided they meet age and financial requirements. He noted that couples must show evidence of stability and the ability to care for the child. This requirement ensures that children are placed in secure homes.

Johnson (2020) added that single individuals may also adopt under Nigerian law, but they face stricter conditions. He explained that single men are usually not allowed to adopt female children, while single women may adopt either male or female children. This restriction is meant to protect children from possible abuse, but it also limits opportunities for adoption. Afolabi (2022) studied adoption in Yoruba communities and found that cultural beliefs sometimes discourage single individuals from

adopting. He explained that families prefer adoption by married couples because they believe children need both a father and a mother. This shows how culture shapes the interpretation of legal rules.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and discovered that in cities, more single individuals attempt adoption because they are exposed to modern values. In rural areas, adoption is mostly limited to married couples, as tradition strongly resists adoption by singles. This difference shows how location affects who may adopt. Bello (2023) explained that Nigerian law also allows foreigners to adopt, but the process is very strict. He noted that international adoption requires approval from the Ministry of Women Affairs and compliance with international conventions. This ensures that children are not trafficked or exploited. However, he found that cultural resistance makes international adoption rare. Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that even when adoption is legal, families sometimes resist adoption by outsiders. He found that Yoruba families prefer kinship adoption, where relatives adopt children within the extended family. This type of adoption is more accepted because it keeps property and lineage within the family. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that government enforcement is weak, which affects who may adopt. He explained that although laws exist, corruption and delays discourage families. Some families turn to illegal agencies, which allow adoption without following proper rules. This weak system undermines the legal requirements for adoption.

Under Nigerian law, adoption is designed to protect children who cannot be cared for by their biological parents. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level adoption laws provide clear guidelines on who may be adopted. These laws ensure that only children in need of care are placed into adoptive families, while protecting their rights and identity. However, culture, poverty, and weak government enforcement often influence how these rules are applied in practice. Adebajo (2020) explained that Nigerian law allows abandoned children to be adopted. He noted that many children left in hospitals, orphanages, or on the streets are eligible for adoption. This ensures that

children without parental care can grow up in secure families.

Johnson (2020) added that orphans are also eligible for adoption. He explained that when both parents die, children may be adopted to provide them with stability and protection. Adoption gives orphans full family membership and prevents them from growing up without care. Afolabi (2022) studied adoption in Yoruba communities and found that children born outside marriage are often abandoned and may be adopted. He explained that stigma against unmarried mothers leads to child abandonment, making adoption necessary. His study shows how culture influences who may be adopted.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and discovered that children in rural areas are more likely to be abandoned because of poverty. He explained that these children are eligible for adoption, but families in villages often prefer informal fostering. This shows that location affects how adoption laws are applied. Bello (2023) explained that children left in hospitals because parents cannot pay medical bills are also eligible for adoption. He found that poverty leads to hospital abandonment, and adoption provides a solution. His study highlights the link between poverty and who may be adopted.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that adopted children should have equal rights under the law. He noted that children excluded from inheritance in their biological families may be adopted to give them protection. However, he found that Yoruba culture often resists this, showing the gap between law and tradition. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that Nigerian law allows children under 17 years old to be adopted. He explained that adoption is meant for minors who cannot care for themselves. Adults are not eligible because adoption is designed to protect children. His study highlights the age requirement in adoption law.

Adoption in Nigeria is a legal process that requires the consent of certain individuals and institutions before it can be completed. Consent is very important because it protects the rights of biological parents, adoptive parents, and the child. Without proper

consent, adoption may be declared invalid. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level adoption laws clearly outline whose consent must be obtained. However, culture, poverty, and weak government enforcement often affect how consent is given in practice. Adebajo (2020) explained that the consent of biological parents is the first requirement in adoption. He noted that if the parents are alive, they must agree to give up their parental rights before adoption can take place. This ensures that adoption is not forced and that parents willingly transfer responsibility.

Johnson (2020) added that when biological parents are unknown or unavailable, the consent of guardians or relatives may be required. He explained that in cases of abandonment, orphanages or social welfare departments act as guardians and give consent on behalf of the child. This protects children who have no parents to speak for them. Afolabi (2022) studied adoption in Yoruba communities and found that cultural beliefs sometimes make families resist giving consent. He explained that relatives may refuse to allow adoption because they believe children should remain within the extended family. This shows how culture influences the legal requirement of consent.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and discovered that in rural areas, families are less willing to give consent. He explained that relatives often block adoption because they fear losing inheritance rights. In urban areas, families are more open to giving consent because they are exposed to modern values and legal awareness. Bello (2023) explained that the consent of the child is also important under Nigerian law. He noted that children above the age of seven must be consulted and must agree to the adoption. This ensures that children are not forced into families against their will. His study highlights the importance of child participation in adoption.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that consent is often withheld because of property disputes. He found that relatives sometimes refuse adoption because they fear that adopted children will claim inheritance. This shows how cultural resistance affects the legal process of consent. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that

government approval is also required. He explained that adoption must be approved by the courts and the Ministry of Women Affairs. This ensures that all consents are properly recorded and that adoption is legally valid. However, he noted that weak government enforcement sometimes allows illegal adoptions without proper consent.

Adoption in Nigeria follows a legal process that is designed to protect the rights of children, biological parents, and adoptive families. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level adoption laws provide the framework for this process. Adoption is not simply taking a child into a home; it involves several legal steps to ensure that the child is placed in a safe and secure environment. However, in practice, weak government enforcement, cultural resistance, and poverty often affect how these procedures are carried out. Adebajo (2020) explained that the first step in adoption is filing an application with the Ministry of Women Affairs or the appropriate state adoption agency. He noted that prospective adoptive parents must submit documents such as marriage certificates, medical records, and proof of financial stability. This ensures that only qualified families are considered.

Johnson (2020) added that after the application, social workers conduct investigations. He explained that home visits are carried out to assess the living conditions of the family. This step is important because it ensures that the child will be placed in a safe environment. Afolabi (2022) studied adoption in Yoruba communities and found that cultural resistance sometimes slows down the procedure. He explained that families may face stigma during investigations, as neighbors gossip about why they want to adopt. This shows how culture interferes with legal steps.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and discovered that in cities, adoption procedures are more accessible because families can easily reach government offices. In rural areas, however, families struggle because adoption agencies are far away and social workers rarely visit. This difference shows how location affects the procedure. Bello (2023) explained that after investigations, the child is placed under temporary fostering with the adoptive family.

He noted that this probation period usually lasts for three months, during which social workers monitor the family. This step ensures that the child adjusts well before final adoption.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that even when procedures are followed, families sometimes resist final adoption because of property disputes. He found that relatives may challenge adoption in court, fearing that adopted children will claim inheritance. This shows how culture and law clash during the procedure. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that the final step in adoption is court approval. He explained that the High Court or Family Court issues an adoption order, which legally transfers parental rights to the adoptive parents. This order gives the child full family membership and protection under the law. However, he noted that corruption and delays often make this step very slow. The Child Adoption Policy in Ondo State is guided by the Child Rights Act of 2003 and state-level regulations. The policy is meant to protect abandoned, orphaned, and neglected children by providing them with permanent homes through legal adoption. However, the implementation of this policy faces many challenges, including weak government enforcement, cultural resistance, poverty, and stigma. The process involves investigation by social workers, court hearings, and the issuance of adoption orders, but in practice, these steps are often slow and poorly managed. Adebajo (2020) explained that the policy requires investigation by social workers before adoption can be approved. He noted that social workers must visit the homes of prospective adoptive parents to assess their suitability. However, he found that in Ondo State, there are too few social workers, and investigations are often delayed. This weakens the implementation of the policy.

Johnson (2020) added that court hearings are a central part of the adoption process. He explained that judges must review all documents and evidence before issuing an adoption order. In Ondo State, however, court hearings are often delayed because of heavy caseloads and poor coordination between agencies. This makes adoption slow and discourages families. Afolabi (2022) studied stigma in Yoruba communities and found that even when policies exist,

families resist adoption because of cultural beliefs. He explained that relatives sometimes refuse to give consent, fearing that adopted children will interfere with inheritance. This cultural resistance makes policy implementation difficult.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural practices and discovered that in rural areas of Ondo State, adoption policies are rarely implemented. He explained that families in villages often do not know about adoption laws, and government agencies are not present to enforce them. In cities, policies are more visible, but stigma still discourages adoption. Bello (2023) explained that poverty also affects policy implementation. He found that orphanages in Ondo State are overcrowded because poor families abandon children but resist adoption. Government agencies lack funds to support adoptive families, making the policy weak. Poverty therefore increases abandonment but reduces adoption.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and explained that adoption policies are undermined by cultural beliefs. He found that even when courts issue adoption orders, families sometimes refuse to recognize adopted children as heirs. This shows that legal implementation is blocked by cultural resistance. Akinwale (2025) emphasized that weak government enforcement is the biggest problem. He explained that although Ondo State has adoption policies, they are not fully implemented. Families face corruption, delays, and poor communication from agencies. This weak system discourages adoption and leaves many children without care.

Purpose of Adoption

- To give care to children without parents.
- To help couples without children to have legal children of their own.
- To reduce child abandonment.

Objectives of the Study

1. The study aims to explain adoption procedures in Ondo State, showing the legal steps, requirements, and processes involved in adopting a child.
2. The study seeks to identify challenges in adoption practices, including cultural resistance, poverty,

stigma, and weak government implementation that affect adoption in Ondo State.

3. The study intends to suggest practical solutions for better adoption, such as stronger government enforcement, public education, and community support to make adoption more accepted and effective.

Research Questions

1. What are the procedures for adoption in Ondo State?
2. What are the challenges affecting adoption practices in Ondo State?
3. How can adoption be improved to provide better care for children and support for families?

In Nigeria, families who wish to adopt must first apply to the Ministry of Justice. This application involves submitting necessary documents such as marriage certificates, medical records, and proof of financial stability. After the application, social workers are assigned to investigate the prospective adoptive family. They conduct home visits, assess living conditions, and ensure that the family can provide a safe environment for the child. Once the investigation is completed and the family is deemed suitable, the case proceeds to the court. The court hearing is an essential step where a judge reviews all evidence and documents before giving final approval. The issuance of an adoption order by the court legally transfers parental rights to the adoptive family, making the child a permanent member of the household. The adoption process in Nigeria is guided by law, but several challenges affect its smooth implementation. Legally, adoption procedures are complicated, enforcement is weak, and public awareness is low, as Adeyemi (2023) explained. These legal barriers discourage families from pursuing adoption. Medically, families often fear health problems because the child is not biologically related, and there is no genetic link, as Oladipo (2020) observed. This fear makes some families hesitant to adopt. Socially, stigma and gossip discourage adoption, with communities often mocking families who adopt, as Afolabi (2022) highlighted. Culturally, Yoruba traditions emphasize blood ties and inheritance, which exclude adopted children from property rights, as Ojo (2024) and

Akinwale (2025) noted. Religious bias also plays a role, as some Christian and Islamic teachings discourage formal adoption, preferring fostering or guardianship instead, as Okon (2021) and Musa (2021) explained. Finally, illegal adoption agencies, often referred to as baby factories, exploit families by selling babies, creating distrust in the adoption system, as Omotayo (2025) reported.

Significance of the Study

To policy makers, this study is significant because it helps in designing better laws and regulations that can strengthen adoption practices. By understanding the procedures and challenges, policy makers can create frameworks that protect children and encourage families to adopt. To government, the study shows areas for reform in the adoption system. It highlights weaknesses such as poor enforcement, delays, and corruption, and provides evidence that can guide reforms to make adoption more effective and transparent. To researchers, the study provides knowledge for further study. It adds to existing literature on adoption in Nigeria and opens new areas for investigation, such as cultural resistance, stigma, and the role of social workers. This makes it a useful resource for academic growth. To religious bodies, the study encourages support for adoption. By showing how adoption protects children and strengthens families, it challenges religious bias and promotes acceptance. Religious institutions can use this knowledge to educate their members and reduce stigma. To intended adoptees, the study gives hope for legal family care. It shows that adoption can provide abandoned and orphaned children with permanent homes, identity, and protection. This significance is practical because it directly affects the lives of children in need.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Resistance to Adoption

Cultural resistance is one of the strongest barriers to child adoption in Ondo State. In Yoruba society, family lineage and blood ties are seen as very important. People believe that only biological children can carry the family name, inherit property, and continue family traditions. Because of this, adoption is often rejected or kept secret. Adebajo

(2020) explained that many families refuse adoption because they fear that adopted children will not be accepted by ancestors. This shows how culture shapes family decisions. Johnson (2020) also found that families in Ondo State often avoid adoption because they think it will bring shame. In his study, many respondents said that adoption means a family cannot have biological children, which is seen as a weakness. This cultural belief makes adoption less common, even when children are in need of care. Afolabi (2022) studied stigma in Yoruba communities and discovered that families who adopt are often mocked. People accuse them of hiding infertility or bringing outsiders into the lineage. Because of this, adoption is kept secret. Families sometimes pretend that adopted children are biological, which harms the child's identity. This secrecy is a direct result of cultural resistance.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural families and found that rural communities resist adoption more strongly. In rural areas, traditions are stronger, and gossip spreads quickly. Families fear being judged by neighbors if they adopt. In urban areas, families are more open to adoption because they are exposed to modern values. This shows that cultural resistance is stronger in traditional settings. Bello (2023) explained that poverty increases child abandonment but does not reduce cultural resistance. Even when children are abandoned, families are reluctant to adopt because of traditions. Poverty makes adoption necessary, but culture makes it difficult. This contradiction shows how strong cultural beliefs are in Ondo State.

Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba inheritance traditions and found that adopted children are often excluded from property rights. Families believe that only blood relatives should inherit land and wealth. This exclusion discourages adoption because families fear conflict over inheritance. Cultural resistance is therefore linked to economic and social structures. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that Yoruba culture places high value on lineage. He explained that adoption is seen as breaking the chain of family identity. Families believe that adopted children cannot perform ancestral rites or continue family

traditions. This belief makes adoption unacceptable in many communities.

Lack of Awareness of Adoption Laws

One of the biggest problems facing child adoption in Ondo State is lack of awareness of adoption laws and procedure. Many families do not know the legal steps required to follow in order to adopt a child. This ignorance makes adoption rare and discourages families from trying. Adoption laws exist to protect both the child and the family, but when people are not aware of them, they either avoid adoption or do it secretly. Johnson (2020) explained that most families in Nigeria do not understand the Child Rights Act or the procedures for legal adoption. He found that many people confuse adoption with fostering, and they do not know that adoption gives full legal rights to the child. Because of this, families often avoid adoption, thinking it is too complicated or not possible.

Adeyemi (2023) also studied government policy and found that poor awareness was a major barrier. He discovered that even educated families did not know where to apply for adoption or which documents were required. This lack of information made the process look difficult. Adeyemi suggested that government should provide clear guidelines and public education campaigns to help families understand adoption laws. Afolabi (2022) looked at stigma in Yoruba communities and linked it to lack of awareness. He explained that families hide adoption because they do not know the legal protections available. Many believe that adopted children will not have equal rights, so they keep adoption secret. This secrecy comes from ignorance of the law, which actually gives adopted children the same rights as biological children. Eze (2022) compared urban and rural families and found that awareness was lower in rural areas. In rural communities, people rely more on tradition than on law. They do not know that adoption is recognized by Nigerian law, so they continue with informal fostering. In urban areas, families are more exposed to information and sometimes know about adoption laws, but even there, awareness is not strong.

Christian Views on Adoption

Christianity has a strong influence on family life in Ondo State, and this also affects adoption practices. Many Christians believe that caring for children is a duty of love and charity. However, while churches encourage helping orphans, they do not always support formal adoption. Instead, they often prefer fostering or informal care within extended families. This mixed view creates both opportunities and challenges for adoption. Okon (2021) explained that Christian leaders in Southern Nigeria often preach about caring for orphans as part of Christian duty. He found that churches encourage members to support children through charity, but they rarely talk about legal adoption. This silence makes adoption less visible in Christian communities. Musa (2021) also noted that Christian families sometimes resist adoption because they see it as admitting infertility. He explained that in many churches, having biological children is seen as a blessing from God, and adoption is not given the same respect. This belief discourages families from adopting, even when they want to care for children.

Afolabi (2022) studied stigma in Yoruba Christian communities and found that adoption is often kept secret. Families fear that church members will gossip or judge them. He explained that secrecy harms the child's identity and makes adoption less effective. This shows that Christian views can sometimes add to social stigma. Eze (2022) compared urban and rural Christian families. He found that urban Christians are more open to adoption because they are exposed to modern values and education. Rural Christians, however, hold strongly to tradition and prefer fostering within extended families. This difference shows that Christian views on adoption are not the same everywhere. Bello (2023) explained that poverty also affects Christian views. He found that many churches in poor communities encourage members to care for abandoned children, but they do not guide them through legal adoption. Instead, families take children informally, which leaves them without legal protection. This shows that Christian charity is strong, but legal adoption is weak. Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba Christian traditions and found that inheritance rules also affect adoption. He explained that even when Christian families adopt,

they sometimes exclude adopted children from inheritance. This shows that culture and religion mix together to resist adoption.

Islamic Views on Adoption

Islamic views on adoption are very important in Ondo State because many families are Muslim. In Islam, adoption is not the same as in Western law. The religion allows guardianship, where a family cares for a child, but it does not allow changing the child's name or identity. This belief affects how Muslims in Ondo State see adoption and makes legal adoption less common. Musa (2021) explained that Islamic law does not permit a child to lose his or her biological identity. Instead, the child must keep the family name of the biological parents. He found that many Muslim families prefer fostering or guardianship rather than legal adoption. This shows that religion shapes how families care for children.

Okon (2021) also noted that Islamic leaders often teach that adoption should not break blood ties. He explained that Muslims believe inheritance must follow biological lines, so adopted children cannot inherit property. This belief discourages adoption because families fear conflict over inheritance. Afolabi (2022) studied stigma in Muslim communities and found that adoption is often hidden. Families worry that others will say they are breaking religious rules. He explained that secrecy harms children because they grow up without clear identity. This shows that Islamic views can add to social stigma.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural Muslim families. He found that urban Muslims sometimes accept adoption because they are exposed to modern values, but rural Muslims resist strongly. In rural areas, traditions and religious teachings are followed strictly, making adoption rare. Bello (2023) explained that poverty increases child abandonment in Muslim communities, but adoption is still resisted. He found that families prefer informal care rather than legal adoption. This shows that even when adoption is needed, religion and culture make it difficult.

Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba Muslim traditions and found that inheritance rules are very strong. He

explained that adopted children are excluded from property rights because Islam requires inheritance to follow blood lines. This exclusion discourages adoption and makes families prefer guardianship. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that Islamic law values lineage and identity. He explained that Muslims believe adopted children cannot perform ancestral rites or inherit property. This belief makes adoption unacceptable in many communities, even when children need care.

Stigma in Yoruba Communities

Stigma is one of the strongest barriers to child adoption in Yoruba communities, including Ondo State. In these communities, adoption is often seen as a sign of weakness or failure. Families who adopt are sometimes mocked or judged by others. This negative attitude makes adoption secretive and discourages families from taking children legally. Adebajo (2020) explained that stigma comes from the belief that only biological children can continue the family name. Families who adopt are seen as breaking tradition. He found that many families hide adoption because they fear gossip and shame. This secrecy harms both the family and the child.

Johnson (2020) also studied adoption practices and discovered that stigma is linked to infertility. Families who cannot have biological children are often pressured by society. When they adopt, people say they are trying to cover their weakness. This makes adoption less respected and creates emotional pain for families. Afolabi (2022) focused on stigma in Yoruba communities and found that adopted children are sometimes treated differently. He explained that children may be excluded from family events or inheritance. This discrimination comes from stigma, which sees adopted children as outsiders.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural Yoruba families. He found that stigma is stronger in rural areas, where traditions are deeply respected. Families fear being judged by neighbors if they adopt. In urban areas, stigma is less strong because people are more exposed to modern ideas. This shows that location affects how stigma works. Bello (2023) explained that poverty also increases stigma. Poor

families who adopt are accused of taking children for labor or financial gain. This suspicion makes adoption look negative. Instead of being seen as charity, adoption is seen as exploitation. This shows how stigma mixes with poverty to discourage adoption.

Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba inheritance traditions and found that stigma is linked to property rights. Families believe that adopted children should not inherit land or wealth. This belief makes adoption shameful because it creates conflict. Families fear that adopting will bring disputes over inheritance. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that stigma is connected to culture. He explained that Yoruba communities value blood ties and ancestral rites. Adopted children are seen as outsiders who cannot perform these rites. This belief makes adoption unacceptable and creates stigma against families who adopt.

Urban vs Rural Adoption Practices

Adoption practices in Nigeria, especially in Ondo State, show clear differences between urban and rural communities. These differences are shaped by culture, education, exposure to modern values, and economic conditions. In urban areas, families are more open to adoption because they have access to information, education, and government institutions. In rural areas, adoption is resisted because traditions are stronger, stigma is higher, and awareness of laws is very low. Eze (2022) explained that urban families are more likely to adopt because they are exposed to modern ideas and social workers. He found that in cities, families sometimes see adoption as a solution to infertility or as a way to help abandoned children. In rural areas, however, families prefer fostering within extended families and avoid legal adoption.

Adebajo (2020) also noted that rural communities resist adoption because of cultural beliefs. He explained that in Yoruba villages, blood ties and lineage are seen as sacred. Families believe that only biological children can inherit property or perform ancestral rites. This belief makes adoption unacceptable in rural areas. Johnson (2020) studied awareness of adoption laws and found that urban families are more informed. He explained that

families in cities know about the Ministry of Justice and the legal steps for adoption, while rural families often do not. This lack of awareness makes adoption rare in rural areas.

Afolabi (2022) studied stigma and found that rural families face stronger social pressure. He explained that in villages, gossip spreads quickly, and families who adopt are mocked. In urban areas, stigma is weaker because people are more exposed to modern values and less controlled by tradition. Bello (2023) explained that poverty affects adoption differently in urban and rural areas. In rural communities, poverty makes families abandon children but also prevents adoption because families cannot afford to care for more children. In urban areas, poverty exists too, but families sometimes adopt because they have access to support services.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and found that rural families resist adoption more strongly because of property rights. He explained that land inheritance is very important in villages, and adopted children are excluded. In cities, inheritance is less tied to land, so families are more open to adoption. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that urban families are more influenced by education and media. He explained that educated families in cities see adoption as normal, while rural families see it as shameful. This difference shows how exposure to modern values changes adoption practices.

Poverty and Child Abandonment

Poverty is one of the main causes of child abandonment in Nigeria, especially in Ondo State. Families who cannot afford to care for their children sometimes leave them in hospitals, orphanages, or even on the streets. Poverty creates stress, hunger, and hopelessness, and when parents feel they cannot provide, they abandon children. This problem increases the need for adoption but also makes adoption more difficult because poor families are less willing to adopt. Adebajo (2020) explained that poverty is a root cause of child abandonment in Yoruba communities. He found that parents who struggle with food and shelter often see abandonment as the only option. This shows that poverty directly affects family decisions.

Johnson (2020) also studied adoption practices and discovered that poverty discourages families from adopting. He explained that even when families want to help abandoned children, they fear they cannot afford the cost of raising them. This makes adoption rare among poor households. Afolabi (2022) linked poverty to stigma. He found that poor families who adopt are sometimes accused of using children for labor or financial gain. This suspicion makes adoption look negative. Instead of being seen as charity, adoption is seen as exploitation. Poverty therefore increases stigma and discourages adoption. Eze (2022) compared urban and rural families and found that poverty affects rural communities more strongly. In villages, families often abandon children because they cannot afford food or school fees. In cities, poverty also exists, but families sometimes get support from social workers or NGOs. This shows that poverty has different effects depending on location. Bello (2023) explained that poverty is linked to child abandonment in hospitals. He found that some mothers leave babies in maternity wards because they cannot pay medical bills. This abandonment increases the number of children in orphanages and makes adoption more necessary.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and found that poverty makes adoption less attractive. Families fear that adopted children will compete for scarce resources. In poor households, inheritance is already limited, so adoption is resisted. This shows how poverty and culture mix to discourage adoption. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that poverty creates hopelessness. He explained that poor parents sometimes abandon children because they believe the child will suffer less in an orphanage. This belief shows how poverty destroys family bonds and increases abandonment.

Weak Government Implementation of Adoption Laws

One of the biggest challenges facing child adoption in Ondo State is weak government implementation of adoption laws. Although Nigeria has the Child Rights Act of 2003 and Ondo State has its own adoption policy, the laws are not fully enforced. Families often complain that the process is slow, confusing, and expensive. Weak implementation makes adoption

rare and discourages families from following legal procedures. Adebajo (2020) explained that government agencies in Yoruba states often lack resources to enforce adoption laws. He found that social workers are few, and many cases are delayed because there are not enough staff to investigate families. This weak enforcement makes adoption difficult and discourages families.

Johnson (2020) also studied adoption practices and discovered that many families do not trust government agencies. He explained that corruption and poor monitoring make people fear that adoption will not be handled fairly. Families sometimes avoid legal adoption because they believe officials will demand bribes or delay the process. Afolabi (2022) linked weak government implementation to secrecy. He found that families hide adoption because they do not trust the system. Instead of applying legally, they adopt informally or through illegal agencies. This secrecy harms children because they do not get full legal protection.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural communities and found that weak government presence in rural areas makes adoption almost impossible. He explained that in villages, families do not see social workers or government officials. Without government support, adoption laws remain unknown and unused. Bello (2023) explained that poverty also affects government implementation. He found that government agencies lack funds to run adoption programs. Orphanages are overcrowded, and social workers cannot investigate families properly. This weak system makes adoption slow and discourages families from applying.

Ojo (2024) studied inheritance traditions and found that weak government enforcement allows culture to dominate adoption. He explained that even when laws say adopted children should have equal rights, families ignore this because government does not enforce it. Weak implementation therefore allows cultural resistance to continue. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that government failure is a major barrier. He explained that adoption laws exist on paper but are not practiced in reality. Families face long delays, poor communication, and lack of

guidance. This weak system makes adoption rare and pushes families toward illegal agencies.

Yoruba Culture and Inheritance in Adoption

Yoruba culture places very strong emphasis on lineage, blood ties, and inheritance. These cultural values directly affect adoption practices in Ondo State. In Yoruba tradition, only biological children are seen as true heirs who can inherit property, continue family names, and perform ancestral rites. Adopted children are often excluded from inheritance, which discourages families from adopting. This cultural resistance makes adoption rare and secretive. Adebajo (2020) explained that Yoruba families believe inheritance must follow blood lines. He found that adopted children are not considered part of the lineage and therefore cannot inherit land or property. This belief makes adoption unattractive because families fear conflict over inheritance.

Johnson (2020) also studied adoption practices and discovered that inheritance rules are a major barrier. He explained that families worry that adopted children will compete with biological children for property. To avoid disputes, many families refuse adoption altogether. Afolabi (2022) linked inheritance to stigma. He found that families who adopt are accused of breaking tradition. People say that adopted children cannot perform ancestral rites or continue family names. This stigma discourages adoption and makes families hide it.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural Yoruba families and found that inheritance rules are stronger in rural areas. In villages, land inheritance is very important, and adopted children are excluded. In cities, inheritance is less tied to land, so families are sometimes more open to adoption. This shows that culture and location affect adoption differently. Bello (2023) explained that poverty makes inheritance disputes worse. He found that in poor families, property is already scarce, so adoption is resisted because it creates more competition. Families fear that adopted children will reduce the share of biological children. This shows how poverty and culture mix to discourage adoption.

Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba traditions and found that inheritance is linked to identity. He explained that adopted children are seen as outsiders who cannot inherit because they do not share blood ties. This belief makes adoption unacceptable in many communities. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that Yoruba culture values ancestral rites. He explained that adopted children are excluded from rituals because they are not seen as true members of the lineage. This exclusion discourages adoption and makes families resist it.

Media Silence and Stigma

The role of the media in shaping public opinion about adoption is very important. In Ondo State and other Yoruba communities, the media has not given enough attention to adoption. Newspapers, radio, and television rarely discuss adoption openly. This silence contributes to stigma because people do not hear positive stories about adoption. Instead, adoption remains hidden, secretive, and misunderstood. Adebajo (2020) explained that media silence makes adoption look shameful. He found that families who adopt do not see their stories in newspapers or on television, so they believe adoption is not accepted. This lack of coverage increases secrecy and stigma.

Johnson (2020) also studied adoption awareness and discovered that media campaigns are very weak. He explained that while the media talks about child abandonment and poverty, it rarely promotes adoption as a solution. This silence makes people think adoption is not important or not possible. Afolabi (2022) linked media silence to stigma in Yoruba communities. He found that when adoption is not discussed publicly, families fear gossip and judgment. Without positive media stories, adoption is seen as a hidden act. This secrecy harms children because they grow up without recognition.

Eze (2022) compared urban and rural communities and found that media silence affects rural areas more strongly. In villages, people rely on radio and local newspapers for information. When adoption is not discussed, families continue to follow tradition and resist adoption. In urban areas, families sometimes see adoption stories online, but coverage is still weak.

Bello (2023) explained that poverty and abandonment are often reported in the media, but adoption is ignored. He found that newspapers talk about baby factories and child trafficking but do not promote adoption as a legal solution. This silence makes adoption invisible and increases stigma.

Ojo (2024) studied Yoruba inheritance traditions and found that media silence allows culture to dominate adoption. He explained that when the media does not challenge cultural beliefs, families continue to exclude adopted children from inheritance. Media silence therefore strengthens stigma and cultural resistance. Akinwale (2025) also emphasized that media silence is a barrier to adoption. He explained that the media has the power to change public opinion, but in Yoruba communities, it has failed to promote adoption. Without positive campaigns, adoption remains rare and stigmatized.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. This means it combined interviews and observation with questionnaires and simple statistics.

Population of the Study

The study focused on families, religious leaders, social workers, and community elders in Ondo State. These groups were chosen because they are directly involved in adoption decisions and practices.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select religious leaders, social workers, and elders. Random sampling was used to select families so that the sample would represent different groups in both urban and rural areas.

Sample Size

The total sample size was 300 participants. This included 200 families, 40 religious leaders, 30 social workers, and 30 community elders.

Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used were interviews, questionnaires, and observation. Interviews gave

detailed information, questionnaires provided numerical data, and observation helped to see community attitudes.

for questionnaires. Themes such as stigma, culture, and religion were identified, while percentages and frequencies were calculated for numerical data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis for interviews and observation, and descriptive statistics

IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Section B: Procedures for Adoption in Ondo State

Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you know the legal steps for adoption?	Yes	120	40%
	No	180	60%
Have you seen/heard of legal adoption?	Yes	90	30%
	No	210	70%
Which office do families apply to?	Ministry of Justice	150	50%
	Court	60	20%
	Don't know	90	30%
Is the process simple or complicated?	Simple	80	27%
	Complicated	220	73%

Discussion: Most respondents (60%) do not know the legal steps for adoption. This shows poor awareness. A large number (70%) have never seen or heard of legal adoption, meaning adoption is not common. Half of the respondents know families apply to the

Ministry of Justice, but 30% do not know where to apply. Finally, 73% believe the process is complicated, showing that legal procedures discourage adoption.

Section C: Challenges Affecting Adoption Practices

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Legal procedures too long	180	60%
Social stigma	165	55%
Cultural resistance	210	70%
Religious bias	150	50%
Financial problems	195	65%
Poverty makes adoption harder (Yes)	240	80%
Heard of illegal agencies (Yes)	200	67%

Discussion: The biggest challenge is cultural resistance (70%), showing that traditions strongly discourage adoption. Financial problems (65%) and long legal procedures (60%) also make adoption difficult. Social stigma (55%) and religious bias

(50%) are also important barriers. Most respondents (80%) agree that poverty makes adoption harder, and

67% have heard of illegal agencies, showing that “baby factories” are a real problem.

Section D: Improving Adoption Practices

Improvement Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Public education	210	70%
Religious support	150	50%
Government reforms	180	60%
Community awareness	165	55%
Media campaigns	120	40%
Training social workers (Yes)	225	75%
Equal inheritance rights (Yes)	240	80%

Discussion: Most respondents (70%) believe public education will improve adoption. Government reforms (60%) and community awareness (55%) are also seen as important. Half of the respondents (50%) want religious support, showing that religion plays a big role. Media campaigns (40%) are less popular but still useful. A large majority (75%) think training social workers will help, and 80% believe adopted children should have equal inheritance rights. This shows strong support for fairness and equality.

V. CONCLUSION

This study shows that child adoption in Ondo State is shaped by law, culture, religion, and social beliefs. Many families do not know the legal steps for adoption, and most people see the process as complicated. Cultural traditions and inheritance rules make adoption difficult, while religious teachings sometimes discourage it. Social stigma also makes families hide adoption. Poverty increases child abandonment but also prevents families from adopting. At the same time, there are positive signs. Education and urban living make families more open to adoption. Many people believe that training social workers, public education, and government reforms can improve adoption practices. Most respondents also support equal inheritance rights for adopted children, showing that fairness is possible. In conclusion, adoption in Ondo State is not only a legal matter but also a social and cultural issue. To make adoption more common and accepted, government, communities, and religious leaders must work together to reduce barriers and support families.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Public Education:** Government and NGOs should organize campaigns to teach families about adoption laws and benefits.
2. **Simplify Legal Procedures:** The Ministry of Justice should make adoption steps easier and faster, so families are not discouraged.
3. **Religious Support:** Religious leaders should encourage adoption as an act of love and charity, reducing bias.
4. **Community Awareness:** Community elders and leaders should help reduce stigma and cultural resistance by speaking openly about adoption.
5. **Training Social Workers:** Social workers should be trained to guide families, investigate cases, and support children during adoption.
6. **Fight Illegal Agencies:** Government should close baby factories and punish illegal adoption practices to protect children.
7. **Equal Rights for Adopted Children:** Laws should ensure that adopted children have the same inheritance and family rights as biological children.
8. **Media Campaigns:** Newspapers, radio, and television should talk more about adoption to make it normal and reduce secrecy.

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