

Child Adoption Investigation in Nigeria: Challenges and Options

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Abstract

Based on qualitative information gathered through nine sessions of in-depth Interview with Social welfare officials and 10 Key informant interviews with five orphanage managers, and five legal practitioners, the study examined the conduct of adoption investigation in three purposively selected Nigerian states. Anchored in the functionalist theory, the study argues that conducting a reliable investigation of child adoption is essential. This is premised on the notion that investigation is highly pivotal to a successful adoption and the ultimate goal of adoption. The study therefore examined the reliability of, and challenges to reliable adoption investigation in Nigeria. Findings revealed that the manner of adoption investigation does not guarantee reliable child placement and security. More so, the process is challenged with unavailability of requisite logistics, lack of synergy between adoption officials, insufficient training and retraining of adoption official and lastly, legal regime backing up the practice. A more systematic and supported investigation is thereby recommended.

Keywords: Adoption challenges, investigation, Nigeria

Introduction

Child adoption is a highly sensitive matter in Nigeria and therefore requires a lot of caution in decisions related to it. Adoption is seen as making an irrevocable and lifelong decision of vital importance to the future of both the baby and the adopting family or household (Chuckwu, 2012). Upon this fact, the practice has attracted several legislations which are expected to serve as guiding principles for all actors involved. For instance, the four cardinal principles of the Convention on the Right of Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of Children (ACRWC) have a direct bearing on the process and the entire practices of child adoption. These legal provisions spell out the basic rights of the child, ranging from the child's right to survival; development; protection from harmful influences, abuses and exploitation, to the right to participate fully in family, culture and social life; all of which are inherent in human dignity and optimum development of the child.

Adoption matters are implicated in the issues of right. Rights are interest or benefit recognized by law. Therefore, adoption as a legal matter presents each and every party involved in it with some measure of right and privileges. Vinogradoff (1924) posits that a right is a kind of claim, whereas Dias (1970)

asserts that the behavior of one person is the substrate, which the right of another is founded. Invariably, the action or inaction of a person or group may determine the likelihood of one infringing or asserting, violating or claiming the rights of another. Hence, in the discourse on ensuring the observation of a child's right and of the child's protection through adoption, the consideration of who takes custody of a child is equally as important as the need to place the children within a family environment. This is because child adoption entails the transference of rights and duties from the original parent to another who legally assume the role of a parent (Ojo, 2013).

The concern for the qualifications of those who care specifically for these adoptive children, and generally for children who are mostly susceptible to abuse, is predicated on frequent stories of child abuse even at the hands of care givers (Davis, Grasso, Kimberly, Wells & Liss, 1998). According to Ojelabi, Osamor & Owunmi (2015), child abuse by adopters is a recurrent social issue in child adoption practice in Nigeria. Also notable is that care provider with a criminal history may not be fit to care for vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, the view on the primacy of biological family presents a difficulty in understanding how a child could be adequately catered for by anyone apart from the biological parent or at least the relative. Such view thereby helps perpetuate notions that adoptive parents have ulterior motives for seeking to adopt an unrelated child. Hence, there are claims, although lacking adequate substantiation that some adopt for the purposes of organ donation, sexual exploitation or economic servitude (Johnson, 2002). In this wise, ethical adoption law requires that a disinterested third party ascertains intending adopter's eligibility for adoption (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016). Adoptive parents are therefore expected to be carefully screened to assure proper motivation and relationship stability for the goal of adoption could be reached.

According to Child Welfare Information Gateway (2016), in all States of American, State laws require background checks for all prospective foster and adoptive parents. With criminal records, one could simply check for the individual's name in State, local or Federal law enforcement agencies' including databases of records, for any history of criminal convictions. These same checks are necessarily done for all adult household members where it concerns the establishment of foster homes, adoptive homes, and facilities that are operated in an individual's home. For a prospective adoptive parent, information is collected for pre-placement evaluation in order to determine if the placement of the minor, would pose a risk to his or her physical and, or psychological well-being. In the event that the information raises a concern about the placement of a minor in the person's home, the evaluator files such a person as unsuitable. These measures are taken in order to forestall the placement of children with a deprived adoptive parent, and to ensure children are placed within homes where their psychological and social needs are assured to be adequately met.

Even after the adoption is completed, in accordance to Article 24(f) of the ACRWC, a follow-up (Post-adoption check) is required. This follow-up report on adoptions is required as a means of monitoring the adopted child's well-being. Follow-up reports are usually useful during the first period of the adoption. Subsequently, in the case of international adoption, it becomes the responsibility of the receiving countries to protect the adopted children as they would protect any other child in their country (ACPF, 2012). Nigeria, being a party to such conventions as the ACRWC and UNCRC, as well as her own domesticated version, Nigeria Child Right Act (CRA) has pledged to ensure that rights and welfare of the Nigerian Child is protected. This obvious fact is demonstrated through initiating actions that shall ensure the observation and popularization of the same. For instance, with specific reference to child adoption, Section 125(1) provides among other things that the State, as well as the Federal Government establishes and maintains within each State and the Federal Capital Territory, a service designed to meet the needs of a child who has been or may be adopted. For all actions geared towards child protection through adoption to be effective, a mechanism must be set for a reliable screening, and adequate post-adoption check on intending adopters.

Adopting Structural functionalism as the explanatory model, the theory analyses the roles of cultural institutions in keeping a society in working order. It focuses on two concepts: Structures and Functions. Structures are various parts of the system, whereas, "Function" is an observable consequence that makes for adaptation and adjustment of the given system. The basic tenet of Structural functionalism is that there are interactions among various parts or institutions of the society. Each structure and part within the larger society is seen as having a part to play in the effective functioning of the entire society. The theory establishes the need for any social system to maintain equilibrium in order to survive. This equilibrium is only achieved when each part contributes its quota to the maintenance of order and stability. In other words, when one of the variables of the system, in this case, the investigation process changes in magnitude or in quality, or in any way affected, the other variables such as adoption stability or secure placement of children are subjected to strains. As a result, the system becomes dysfunctional. In this view, the need for a reliable adoption investigation is considered paramount if the practice must be functional.

The unique reality of the adoption investigation process in Nigeria needs to be explored. Nigeria suffers from deficient national data repository. It therefore appears almost impossible to access useful information on criminal history or record of individual within her scope. In the adoption discourse, this situation raises a concern on the determination of the personality, and specifically, the behavioural inventory of intending adopters. Hence, the question of how investigation is conducted to ensure psychological, physical and social security of children who are placed within adoptive homes becomes germane, yet

unanswered. Also, there is need to examine the process and challenges of post adoption check which serves as a surveillance mechanism after children have been adopted. This study therefore addressed this puzzle within placement of children in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

The South-western region of Nigeria comprises Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Oyo, and Ekiti. Three States in the South-western geopolitical zone were chosen as study areas. These States are Lagos, Ogun and Oyo. The choice of these States rests on the different characteristics possessed by them that directly or indirectly may affect adoption processes and practices. These States were chosen purposively; they are among the first twelve states created in Nigeria and share several realities particularly, as states that have long history of adoption practices in South-western Nigeria. Till date, the northern Nigeria does not approve of the practice of adoption meanwhile baby factory is the prevailing problem in the South-eastern Nigeria. In South-western Nigeria, the growing acceptability of child adoption has created pressure on the pool of available children, a situation that may bear influence on the processes and procedure of the practice.

The choice of Lagos state was predicated on the fact that legally approved institutional adoption in South-western region of Nigeria, according to family law, started with Lagos state adoption law of 1968 which came after the twelve state structure of 1967 and even till now, the adoption laws of Lagos state still remain the basis from which many other South-western adoption laws were fashioned. Lagos State is cosmopolitan, therefore allowing for diverse cultural composition resident within the area. Lagos state geographically shares boundaries with some neighbouring countries, a significant factor that could negatively influence child placement and adoption, and foster child trafficking under an improperly regulated adoption system.

Ogun state adoption law, No3 of 1968 came shortly after the creation of the 12 state structures in 1967. The choice of Ogun state was founded on the fact that at the outset of this research, this state is one of the states in South-western Nigeria faced with grave difficulty of meeting the needs of prospective adopters as a result of higher demand (Awoyinfra, 2014). Ogun state also share boundaries with some neighbouring countries. The peculiarity of these States is also marked by wide gap between the demand for, and available adoptable children.

Oyo State, according to the 2006 Census emerged as the second (after Lagos state) most populated state in South-western Nigeria. Also, the state is one of the first twelve states created in Nigeria, from which Osun state was later hewed out. Oyo state passed its adoption law in 1984, No 4 of 1985, and since then, has been deeply involved in the practice of child adoption. Preliminary study during the visits paid to the State Ministry handling child adoption, at the outset of this research revealed Oyo State to be one of those States where the demand for adoption in recent time has greatly surpassed the

available adoptable children. This factor, arguably, may bear influence on the process and procedure for child adoption

Personnel who hold very significant positions in the determination of the placement of children in the three selected states constituted the study population. This included various significant actors in child placement within the ministries in which adoption matters are domicile. This group of people included magistrate presiding over the magistrate/family courts handling adoption matters within the states; Social welfare or Probation officers and Patron/Matron of orphanages within the states.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study in selecting the required sample at every stage of data collection. First, three states in South-western Nigeria were purposively selected because of their well-established system of adoption. Second, in each state, purposive sampling was adopted in the selection of participants whose opinion was considered necessary in meeting the objectives of the research. There were three distinct categories of respondents comprising Social welfare officers, Orphanage Managers and Legal Practitioners.

Qualitative methods of data collection were used, involving the conduct of nine sessions of In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with a total of nine Social welfare officers across the selected three States. Also, a total of 10 Key informants Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with five managers of orphanages where adopted children are usually withdrawn for adoption, as well as five legal practitioners in the magistrate or family court that handles adoption matters.

Content analysis was adopted for data analysis due to the qualitative nature of the data collected. The data was managed through the process of collation, storing, and processing of information using a Computer Assisted Analysis. Both the In-depth Interviews and Key Informant Interview were transcribed verbatim within 48 hours. Similar thoughts expressed across methods were identified, coded and grouped together. And from this, a unifying concept or underlying theme was derived. Key-points, catch phrases and illustrations and countenance dispositions were also keenly taken cognizance of, and were used to match the verbally revealed findings. Finally, emerging themes that were similar were grouped together to create major themes.

Results

Overview of the Pre-Adoption Investigation

Investigations that are conducted at the pre-placement stage of adoption are done either to the determination of intending adoptee's adoptability status or of intending adopters' eligibility or genuineness of request. The recognition of the place of investigation to the successful completion of an adoption process is well acknowledged even among various adoption officials. This knowledge was presented in an interview with a legal practitioner who posits:

We don't give babies to convict; to people who have had history of abusing children, battering women or children. If you tell us you have never fallen into it, and we find out during our investigation, such a person would be disqualified. (*KII/Legal Practitioner/Nov, 2016*)

However, because ideas are sometimes encumbered by a number of factors thereby creating a huge gap between knowledge and practices, the recognition of investigation as pivotal to a hitch-free child placement has notably not translated to practice. On investigating the prospective adopters, an adoption official confessed to how investigations are restricted to checking for the consistency of the information provided on the application forms with the intending adopter's responses to query raised at panel meetings. During the investigation process, a panel is set up at the State level to ask the intending adopters several questions; majority of which had been raised in the application form. These questions range from family type of intending adopters; both of orientation and procreation, mode of income generation, past life events and also a subjective enquiry into if intending adopters have a criminal history. Findings revealed that these investigations in most places lack scientific method. Responding to the manner of investigation, an adoption official submits:

We don't conduct background checks. When they apply to us, we interview them. In the form given to them, necessary information such as address is gotten e.t.c. investigation is carried out to verify such information such as place of work. (*IDI/Oyo/Social Worker 2/May, 2016*)

Correspondingly, the importance of investigation was also stressed in another locality. However, while this was stated, it was equally noted that adoption investigation process is worrisome owing to its modus operandi. Reliance on traditional mechanism for the determination of adopters' eligibility may need some redress in order to specifically realize the essence of investigation and in general, the goals of adoption. Lack of training and inadequate modern investigation facilities have been reported as the main bane of investigation in Nigeria. Failure of any society to prevent or control crime lies in the inability to have a good grip of its crime investigation (Chinwokwu, 2013). Speaking in the light of this, several opinions on what would improve the present state of adoption, cognate to investigation. A particular respondent avers:

...Investigation! I always take my time to investigate, and I use all the links and avenue under my capacity, because I won't be able to give up a child that the investigation was not thoroughly conducted. I could carry out investigation for more than one year... If I have my way, I would make all things necessary for proper investigation available... (*IDI/Social Worker1/Lagos/Nov, 2015*)

Although, it is expedient that adoption officials that are charged with the responsibility of investigating the eligibility of prospective adoptive parent do so carefully. Methods adopted in doing this necessarily need be given due consideration, bearing in mind its implication for the reliability of such information issued, as well as the celerity of the processes of investigation. Most investigative processes, even crime investigation in most developing countries are lacking in the use of technological device (Onyeozili, 2008). From the above respondent, investigation on both adoptability statuses of children, as well as the determination of the qualification of intending adopters takes ample period of time. This may be connected to lack of comprehensive data based system in Nigeria. Investigations are supposed to be scientific (Soyombo, 2005), requiring a combination of face-to-face inquiry and interrogation of the intending adopter, as well as discreet gathering of needful information that would enhance proper placement of children. These discreet measures mostly accomplished through the consultation of a reliable national data base have been found lacking in the Nigerian adoption system.

Another paramount area where proper investigation is required to guarantee child protection is the conduct of a reliable post-adoption check. Follow-up reports are needful as a means of monitoring the adopted child's well-being (ACRWC, 2012). Further inquiry into the process of adoption investigation reveals a huge number of challenges that confronts proper scrutiny of intending adopter. These challenges of investigation were recorded at both the pre placement and post placement stages of child adoption. Some of these are presented below.

Challenges of Pre-Placement Investigation and Post adoption Checks in Nigeria

The pre-placement stage is characterized by two decisions; the determination of adoptability of the child, as well as the eligibility of the intending adopters. However, the focus of this study is on the notable challenges confronting key actors towards the conduct of a smooth and reliable investigation on the eligibility of intending adopter. Also is the need to constantly check that children who are placed within various adoptive homes are safe and secure from any form of maltreatment or threat. In this study, three major challenges were identified as confronting adoption investigation in Nigeria. These are: poor logistics, lack of synergy between officials and lack/inconsistent training of officials. While these factors present a challenge that cut across both pre-placement and post placement stages, some cultural issues supplement these challenges at the post placement stage. These are highlighted below:

Logistics-related Problems in Adoption Investigation

Logistics was mentioned by adoption officials as posing a serious challenge to effective investigation. Logistic has always been closely related to security

issues. The availability of requisite logistics is very important to security effectiveness. For instance, modern security operations require mobility (Rodrigue and Slack, 2002). Many times, inadequate equipment has impeded quality performance of security agents. Issues relating to the availability of requisite logistics were reported as a major factor that negatively affects adoption investigation. In one of the interview sessions, a social worker posits:

The officers need support for mobility in order to conduct investigation. I don't want to be thinking of how petrol gets into the vehicle. If the logistics are there, the work would go on more smoothly. (*IDI/Social Worker1/Lagos/Nov, 2015*)

Correspondingly, some other adoption officials lamented over work-life experiences and possible influence of these in procuring a reliable investigation. The logistic issues reported also cover the day-to-day running cost of investigation and practically reveal a poor fiscal plan and lack of quality attention either from the state government or the administrators of the system.

We do not have anything in the ministry. Since April last year, we have not gotten any imprest. We are currently being owed about five month's salary. Our imprest is so meager; also not enough to carry out the assignment, yet, it has not been paid since last year. We just do the work because we are interested in it. (*IDI/Oyo/SocialWorker2/May, 2016*)

Findings revealed that even at times, intending adopters do sponsor the process of investigation. Hence, augmenting for money from intending adopters was explained by workers as a coping strategy adopted to mitigate the problems of delayed and meager imprest given by government to conduct the necessary information. This, according to the officials, is enough to disrupt adoption investigation and get workers disinterested in performing the necessary investigation rite. Aligning with the idea of these adoption officials, Adegoke (2014) posits that lack of proper funding of security personnel in discharging their duties result to lack of motivation, thereby negatively impacting on their performance. Hence, in order to record effective functioning and quality performance, security sector charged with the responsibility of ensuring security should be adequately budgeted for (Ufot, Peter, John & Attai, 2014). In addition, the issues with lack of necessary logistics is not limited to the pre-placement stage, evidences abound to the failure in the proper conduct of post adoption follow-up. This has been attributed by some social workers to a loss of requisite zeal arising from insufficient funding. On the failure to the proper conduct of a follow-up, a key informant submitted:

I want some kind of visitation even after the final order has been given. Just once in a while check on the child. What if the parents now have their own biological children, what is the fate of that child? I really want something to be done in that line. Yes, you have made the final order, but a kind of update where

you observe if the child is really happy and not being maltreated or discriminated because of the circumstances surrounding the child's appearance in the family is needed. It should not be automatic; you should still have some kind of connection, and we should be able to keep tracks. I hope we could have a system where one can pop into them unawares to actually see how the child is living. You know when they are expecting you, everything would be spin and spank. (*Ogun/Magistrate/KII/May 2016*)

Regardless of any justification for not holding a consistent post adoption follow-up, the position on the need for this exercise is un-debatable. Hence, failure in conducting a post adoption check may likely bear some dysfunctional consequences on the process of adoption, an ultimately, the adopted child.

Insufficient Training/re-training and Trained Investigation Officials

Generally, Nigeria suffers from inadequate trained security personnel (Adegoke, 2014). Specifically, in the domains of child adoption, inadequate trained investigation officials, as well as lack of consistent training of the adoption officials were also noted as challenges confronting effective adoption investigation. Some of the interviewees noted this:

We have done so much already but may need to imitate some foreign strategies. They need to get more training. Even, I myself need more training. (*KII/Matron1/Lagos/Nov, 2015*)

Many of the respondents identified training of officials as a fundamental problem confronting the system of adoption. Even where there was no record of being short-staffed, there were complaints on the composition of the officials with regards to the number of workers who are well equipped and properly trained to occupy the offices they hold. One of the respondents puts it thus:

... there must be workshop training for professionals and at the same time, the government should recruit more people because we have few staff...We have been restricted, in that we are not many; we are few. For instance, in my zone, I am the only professional staff; the man assisting me is not. (*IDI/Oyo/ Social Worker3/ May 2016*)

Consolidating the argument on the need for proper capacity building of adoption officials who are preoccupied with investigating the suitability of intending adopters, and in addition, the need to obey arm's length principles that undergirds the processes, one of the respondents suggested that screening should not be done by just some persons. It rather should be conducted by, and

be the reserve of experienced persons and professionals who are sure would give priority to merit and not favouritism.

Generally, in security discourse, the proficiency of the agents who are to drive home or enforce the observation of the rules governing behavior has always being a major issue. For instance, in the traditional security sector analysis, police force ineffectiveness has been reported as a combination of several factors amongst which are: lack of resources and appropriate training (Adegoke, 2014). This need for proper training was equally reiterated by Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpan-Robaro (2013) who opine that weak security system results from inadequate training of those saddled with the responsibility. Consequently, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situation lack expertise that is required to handle them in a way that forestalls its occurrence.

On the Lack of Synergy between Adoption Officials

The thrust of functionalism is that system stability lies in the responsiveness of each constituent part. Hence, for there to be order and stability, each part must contribute its own quota. Lack of synergy between adoption officials was also identified as one of the major problems confronting the realization of a reliable adoption investigation. Some officials report this as a challenge to effective investigation, considering that efforts towards investigation are supposed to be concerted and complementary, however, this is not always the same. In view of this, an orphanage manager commented thus:

There are still areas that need to be tidied up particularly in the area of the police; often times, they write in their extract that the investigation would be conducted, they hardly ever do it. It is the Social workers that do the investigation and if anything goes wrong thereafter, it would be at the expense of the social worker. Meanwhile, efforts towards investigation should be complementary; while they conduct their investigation, the Social workers should conduct their own investigations, but, we find most of the time, the court solely relying on investigations made by social workers. Sometimes the adopters' information is misleading; they write their home address, you would look for it for days, you would never find it. (*KII/Lagos/Matron 2/May 2016*)

These lackadaisical attitudes are recorded challenges that undermine proper investigation. In the words of Ufot (2014), harmony and unity are very important security element. Security is usually a collective responsibility, especially among those who are charged with the responsibility. In other words, there must be an effective liaison amongst child security officials, particularly with regards to complementing investigation effort. This is sure to enhance amongst other things, flow of useful information and intelligence sharing among officials. While still alluding to the need for concerted efforts

toward investigation, a social worker averse for a more comprehensive investigation, as well as the broadening of investigator scope to include some other state security apparatuses. She said:

To be able to say you are sure of what you are doing 100%, we can involve the SSS to dig deeper into their background... most especially when it has to do with international adoption in order to safeguard against trafficking. Having a better synergy with them would go a long way. (*Social worker2/ Lagos/ November, 2015*)

The need for the inclusion of the States Security officials may be suggestive beyond the need for multiple screening or complementarities but also could be considered necessary to guarantee more trained hands for more reliable investigation processes.

The Social and Legal Regime on Adoption in Nigeria

The procedure for adoption in Nigeria is one that supports and advances the conceptualization of the adoptive parties as categories that must be hidden in the society. According to Nwaoga (2013), sociocultural and environmental factors do tremendously affect the process of adoption in Nigeria. Already, in Nigeria, adopting is almost synonymous to being infertile, and the inability of a person to reproduce him/herself is usually a thing of shame that attracts scorn of the people. Nigeria practices a close system of adoption in which adoption processes are done discreetly. The idea of closed adoption or keeping adoption matters secret would continue to sponsor stigma associated with adopting children as the notion prevails that child adoption is an act designed for the infertile to manage infertility. The idea of close adoption may in fact, be justified on the claim that it protects the image of the adopter and the adoptive child within the society that is less receptive to the practice. It should however be noted that such necessity is continually enforced by the process of adoption that emphasizes and maintains secrecy in all procedure and processes appertaining to child adoption. A Social worker shares her experience:

I had an experience with a prospective adopter after stating the requirement, the woman just frowned...Most adopters, once they get the child, would begin to misbehave because they don't want to come to court. Some even feel very discomfort when you go for home visit. (*IDI/Oyo/Social Worker2/ May/2016*)

During the process of adoption, each stage is done discreetly till the final stage of the adoption where the final order is given to the relinquishment of the child. In other words, most scrutiny done at the pre-placement stages are at most times void of requisites interrogation of significant people such as co-workers, community member and many others who may possess relevant information to

the determination of the adopter's suitability. Also, during the post adoption check, many successful adopters have been found not comfortable with the continuous visitation. This is because all through, the adoption process is not made public hence people are made to believe that they are no more childless. Therefore, such necessities that may reveal the origin of the child are usually frowned at. This kind of procedure and processes are in a way antithetical to the original essence of child adoption, and stands as an impediment to the conduct of necessary post adoption check as well as its motive of child protection. Thereby, placing adopted child at risk.

In all, availability of requisite logistics, training of officials, synergy between adoption official for complementary information gathering and sharing are significant parts, and fundamental to securing a reliable adoption investigation. In other words, each of these parts is expected to function effectively if the role of investigation must be realized. However, logistic issues, inadequate training, lack of synergy between officials prevailed as issues confronting adoption investigation. These undermine input of many of the officials, and constitute a bane to quality adoption investigation. The study concludes that the mode of adoption investigation adopted in these localities would not guarantee a reliable or systematic investigation. Therefore, a more systematic and supported investigation is recommended. In this wise, a combination of face-to-face inquiry and interrogation of the intending adopter, as well as discreet gathering of needful information that would enhance proper placement of children is advised. This discreet information gathering therefore suggests that a more open system of adoption be embraced.

Also, as a matter of effective functioning and proper management of the security sector generally, child welfare and security sector should be adequately budgeted for in order to improve and provide for necessary logistics for improved performance. Training and consistent retraining of child adoption investigative officer is also recommended to be considered as priority in order to procure an efficient and reliable adoption investigation.

Conclusion

The importance of adoption investigation to successful placement of children remains undeniable. However, investigation process is worrisome owing to its modus-operandi which is fraught with complexity. The poor technological advancement in Nigeria has far-reaching consequences that negatively affect security assurances to forestall deviation the rules of engagement. Annexing to this is the social and legal regime on adoption in Nigeria which disallows for open investigation and scrutiny of intending adopters.

Indeed, undertaking a reliable investigation in a society lacking in requisite tools and gadgets may be difficult, if not impossible. Hence, Nigeria generally characterized by problems relating to effective crime investigation also experiences same in her adoption system, faced with diverse challenges that hamper reliable and valid investigation processes. This implies dysfunctionality of the adoption process, which invariably places the adopted

children at risk. The paper therefore suggests a more systematic, open and supported adoption investigation process for Nigeria, as a way of restoring confidence in the system.

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