



Perceptions of Artificial Insemination Among Members of the Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Ife DCC Headquarters, Ibadan: A Religio-Ethical Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of artificial insemination (AI) among members of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Oke-Ife District Coordinating Council (DCC) Headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. Utilising a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from 475 respondents. The findings reveal a nuanced and often divided perception toward AI, with 58.94% of respondents affirming that AI is not inherently sinful, and 69.32% recognising it as a medical breakthrough. However, 52.91% associate AI with a lack of faith in divine intervention, indicating a deep theological tension between medical science and spiritual reliance. The research identifies biblical interpretation, doctrinal teachings, gender roles, and cultural expectations as key determinants of perception. Ethical concerns such as marital fidelity, procreation, spiritual integrity, donor anonymity, and lineage identity are central to the discourse. The study further explores alternative solutions to infertility, including adoption, fostering, and spiritual child-naming, which are increasingly being considered within the Christian community. It concludes that while medical advancements are acknowledged, theological convictions significantly shape the acceptance or rejection of AI. The research recommends enhanced theological education on bioethical issues, development of pastoral counselling frameworks, and inclusive dialogue within Christian communities to address infertility with both compassion and doctrinal clarity. This work contributes to the intersection of theology, ethics, and reproductive technologies in African Christian contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Infertility remains a profound socio-medical and spiritual challenge, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where childbearing is deeply intertwined with identity, lineage, and social status.¹

¹ World Health Organization, "Infertility," 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/infertility>.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of infertility affects approximately one in four couples, often leading to stigmatisation, marital strain, and psychological distress.² Within this context, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), including artificial insemination (AI), have emerged as potential solutions. However, their reception within religious communities, especially conservative Christian denominations, remains complex and often contentious.

The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), a prominent Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria, places strong emphasis on divine intervention, faith healing, and scriptural fidelity. As such, technological interventions in reproduction are frequently scrutinised through theological and ethical lenses.³ While AI offers a medical pathway to parenthood, it raises doctrinal questions concerning marriage, procreation, and the sanctity of the conjugal union. These concerns are not unique to the CAC but reflect broader tensions within global Christianity regarding the moral permissibility of reproductive technologies.

This study focuses on the perceptions of AI among members of the CAC Oke-Ife DCC Headquarters in Ibadan. It seeks to understand how biblical interpretation, ecclesiastical teaching, and personal faith shape attitudes toward AI. Given the increasing availability of ARTs in urban Nigeria and the persistent stigma around infertility, it is imperative to explore how religious communities navigate these modern medical realities. The research contributes to the intersection of theology, ethics, and public health by providing empirical insights into the lived beliefs of a specific Christian community.

The Christ Apostolic Church, rooted in the Aladura movement and influenced by Holiness-Pentecostal theology, maintains a high view of divine sovereignty in human affairs.⁴ This theological posture often leads to suspicion or outright rejection of technological interventions in reproduction, particularly when perceived as circumventing God's will. However, as ARTs become more accessible in major Nigerian cities, an increasing number of church members are confronted with the dilemma of choosing between medical solutions and doctrinal fidelity.

² O Adojutogba et al., "Infertility in Nigeria: A Review of Prevalence, Causes, and Management," *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 26, no. 1 (2022): 89–102.

³ Eva Shaw Taylor, "The Role of Women in the Church and in Christ Apostolic Church in Particular.," *Scriptura: Journal for Contextual Hermeneutics in Southern Africa* 112, no. 1 (2013): 1–13.

⁴ Babatunde A Adedibu et al., "The 'Invisible Enemy' COVID-19 and the Responses of Aladura Churches in South West Nigeria," *Sabinet: African Journal* 46, no. 01 (2022), <https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.4102/tv.v46i1.138>.

This research is particularly timely, as Nigeria witnesses a gradual expansion of fertility clinics and reproductive services, especially in urban centres like Ibadan and Lagos. Yet, there remains a significant gap in theological reflection on these technologies within African Christian circles. Most existing literature on Christian bioethics originates from Western contexts and does not adequately account for the socio-cultural and ecclesial dynamics of African Christianity.⁵ This study fills that gap by offering a contextually grounded analysis of how a Nigerian Pentecostal community engages with the ethical and spiritual dimensions of artificial insemination.

Statement of the Problem

Infertility is not merely a medical condition but a multifaceted crisis affecting emotional, social, and spiritual well-being, particularly within religious communities where childbearing is viewed as a divine blessing.⁶ In Nigeria, the pressure to bear children often leads to marital discord, ostracisation, and deep personal anguish, especially for women.⁷ While artificial insemination presents a viable medical intervention, its acceptance within conservative Christian circles remains limited due to theological reservations.

The Christ Apostolic Church, grounded in Holiness and Pentecostal traditions, upholds a high view of divine sovereignty in matters of life and procreation. This theological posture often leads to suspicion or outright rejection of technological interventions in reproduction. However, as ARTs become more accessible in urban centres like Ibadan, an increasing number of church members are confronted with the dilemma of choosing between medical solutions and doctrinal fidelity.

Despite the growing relevance of this issue, there is a paucity of empirical research on how Nigerian Pentecostal Christians, particularly members of the CAC, perceive AI. Existing literature tends to focus on Western Christian perspectives or general bioethical debates, often neglecting the socio-cultural and ecclesial nuances of African Christianity.⁸ This gap limits the ability of church leaders, theologians, and healthcare professionals to engage meaningfully with affected individuals.

⁵ S.M. Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (Basic Books, 2021).

⁶ Marcia C. Inhorn and Pasquale Patrizio, "Rethinking Reproductive 'Tourism' as Reproductive 'Exile,'" *Fertility and Sterility* 92, no. 3 (2009): 904–6.

⁷ A. Bankole and S. Singh, "The Economic Impact of Infertility in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics* 157, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.14021>.

⁸ Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*.

Furthermore, the lack of structured pastoral guidance on reproductive technologies exacerbates confusion and guilt among infertile couples. Some view AI as a violation of marital sanctity or a sign of weak faith, while others see it as a legitimate use of God-given medical knowledge. Without informed theological reflection, individuals may face internal conflict, familial pressure, or exclusion from communal support systems.

Therefore, this study addresses the critical need to examine the perceptions of AI among CAC members in Oke-Ife DCC, Ibadan. It seeks to uncover the underlying beliefs, ethical concerns, and scriptural interpretations that influence attitudes toward this reproductive technology. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between faith, fertility, and modern medicine in an African Christian context.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can the ethical and theological disputes surrounding artificial insemination be critically examined using biblical and ethical frameworks?
2. What are the perceptions of Christians, particularly members of the Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Ife DCC, regarding artificial insemination?
3. What are the perceived effects of artificial insemination on Christian marriages and family life?
4. What alternative solutions to infertility are considered viable within the Christian community, and how do they align with theological principles?

These questions are designed to explore both doctrinal convictions and lived experiences, enabling a comprehensive analysis of how faith communities interpret and respond to reproductive technologies.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse biblical and ethical perspectives on artificial insemination within the framework of Christian theology.
2. To assess the perceptions of members of the Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Ife DCC, regarding the moral and spiritual implications of artificial insemination.
3. To evaluate the perceived impact of artificial insemination on Christian marital and family dynamics.

4. To identify and examine alternative approaches to infertility that are considered theologically acceptable within the Christian community.

These objectives aim to provide a balanced exploration of the subject, integrating scriptural interpretation, ethical reasoning, and empirical data from a specific religious community.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Max Weber's theory of social action, which distinguishes between instrumental-rational, value-rational, affectual, and traditional actions.⁹ Within the context of reproductive decision-making, individuals' choices regarding artificial insemination can be understood as value-rational actions, decisions guided by deeply held beliefs, moral values, and religious convictions rather than purely utilitarian considerations.

Weber's framework allows for an analysis of how theological doctrines shape individual and communal responses to medical technologies. For instance, a decision to reject AI may not stem from ignorance of its medical efficacy but from a value-rational commitment to the belief that procreation must occur within the natural conjugal act as ordained by God. Conversely, acceptance of AI may be rooted in the value-rational belief that medical science is a divine gift intended to alleviate human suffering.¹⁰

Also, the study incorporates the principle of *sensus fidelium* the collective discernment of the faithful as a theological lens through which communal beliefs are validated.¹¹ This principle acknowledges that doctrinal understanding evolves through the lived experiences and reflections of believers, particularly in matters not explicitly addressed in scripture.

The integration of Weber's sociological theory with theological hermeneutics provides a robust framework for interpreting the complex interplay between faith, ethics, and medical practice. It enables the researcher to move beyond binary judgments of "right" or "wrong" and instead explore the motivations, values, and worldviews that inform individual and communal stances on artificial insemination.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is built on three interrelated domains: biblical theology, bioethics, and sociocultural context.

⁹ M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (A. M. Henderson & T. Parsons, Trans.) (Free Press, 1947).

¹⁰ Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics : A Primer for Christians, 3rd Edition* (Eerdmans, 2013).

¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on the Procured Abortion* (Vatican Press, 1975).

1. **Biblical Theology:** This domain examines scriptural teachings on marriage, procreation, and divine sovereignty. Key passages such as Genesis 1:28 (“Be fruitful and multiply”), Matthew 19:6 (“What therefore God has joined together...”), and Romans 14:23 (“Whatever is not from faith is sin”) are central to understanding how scripture informs attitudes toward reproductive technologies.
2. **Bioethics:** This domain applies ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice to the practice of artificial insemination (Beauchamp & Childress, 2019: 145). It evaluates whether AI respects the dignity of the human person, upholds marital integrity, and promotes the well-being of all parties involved, including the child, parents, and broader community.
3. **Sociocultural Context:** This domain considers the Nigerian and African worldview, where fertility is often equated with blessing, and childlessness with spiritual or moral failure (Adewuya, 2021: 147). It also accounts for the influence of patriarchal structures, gender roles, and communal expectations on individual decisions.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of perceptions toward artificial insemination.

Research Design

A descriptive survey design was utilised to gather data from members of the Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Ife DCC Headquarters, Ibadan. This design enabled the researcher to collect, analyse, and interpret data on attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to AI.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of adult members of the CAC Oke-Ife DCC, including both married and single individuals. A sample size of 500 was initially targeted, with a response rate of 475, yielding a 95% return rate. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across age, gender, and marital status.

Data Collection Instruments

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire contained closed-ended and Likert-scale items covering demographic

information, awareness of AI, theological perceptions, and ethical concerns. Interviews were conducted with 15 key informants, including pastors, elders, and couples who had experienced infertility, to gain deeper insights.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the research instrument was reviewed by two theology scholars and pre-tested with 30 church members. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high reliability. Content validity was established through expert review and alignment with research objectives.¹²

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymising responses and securing data electronically. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board of Christ Apostolic Church Theological Seminary, Ile-Ife.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages. The formula used for percentage calculation was the simple percentage. Data were presented in tables and bar charts for clarity. Qualitative data from interviews were thematically analysed using coding and categorisation to identify recurring patterns and narratives.¹³

DISCUSSION

Critical Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a complex and often ambivalent perception of artificial insemination among CAC members. While a significant proportion acknowledge its medical value, theological concerns remain dominant.

Perception of AI as a Divine or Anti-Divine Act

58.94% of respondents (29.68% strongly agreed, 29.26% agreed) believe that AI is a divinely ordained means to address infertility. This suggests a growing openness to viewing medical intervention as part of God's providence. However, 41.07% (25.05% disagreed, 16% strongly disagreed) reject this view, perceiving AI as interfering with divine will.

¹² Denise F. Polit and Cheryl T. Beck, *Essentials of Nursing Research: Appraising Evidence for Nursing Practice (10th Ed.)* (Wolters Kluwer, 2021).

¹³ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (Sage, 2022).

This division reflects a broader tension in Christian bioethics: whether medicine should be seen as cooperating with God’s creative order or usurping His authority.¹⁴ Those who accept AI often cite biblical examples of divine intervention in barrenness as precedents for seeking help, whether through prayer or medicine.

AI as a Medical Breakthrough

A strong majority (70.10%) agree that AI should be considered a medical breakthrough. This indicates a level of scientific literacy and appreciation for technological advancement within the congregation. However, this acceptance is tempered by moral caution.

Faith and Medical Intervention

Notably, 58.58% of respondents agree that AI portrays a lack of faith in God, despite its medical benefits. This reveals a deep-seated belief that reliance on technology may undermine trust in divine provision. Such a perspective aligns with the “faith-only” tradition prevalent in many African Pentecostal circles.¹⁵

Moral Boundaries

Respondents overwhelmingly condemned non-consensual insemination, with 98.32% affirming its immorality. This underscores a strong ethical commitment to bodily autonomy and consent, reflecting both Christian and universal moral principles.

Psychological and Identity Concerns

Over 74.52% expressed concern about donor-conceived children being unaware of their biological father. This highlights anxieties about lineage, identity, and the integrity of the family unit—issues that resonate with African communal values and biblical genealogies.

Financial Implications of Artificial Insemination

The cost of AI was identified as a significant barrier, with many respondents acknowledging that the procedure is financially out of reach for average church members. This economic dimension adds another layer of complexity, as affordability often determines access regardless of theological stance.¹⁶

Marital and Family Dynamics

Some respondents expressed concern that AI could introduce tension into marriages, particularly if one spouse supports the procedure while the other opposes it on religious grounds.

¹⁴ Meilaender, *Bioethics : A Primer for Christians, 3rd Edition*.

¹⁵ Allan H Anderson, *African Reformation : African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Africa World Press, 2001).

¹⁶ L. Garceau et al., “Economic Implications of Assisted Reproductive Techniques : A Systematic Review,” *Human Reproduction* 17, no. 12 (2002): 3090–109, <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/17.12.3090>.

Others feared that donor conception might lead to future familial conflicts, especially if the child discovers their non-biological parentage.

Biblical Interpretations and Theological Justifications

Several respondents referenced Genesis 16 (Hagar and Sarah) as a precedent for artificial insemination, arguing that the use of a surrogate or donor is biblically permissible. However, others countered that Hagar was a slave and her use was a product of human impatience, not divine command, and thus not a model for modern practice.¹⁷

Alternative Solutions to Infertility

A growing number of respondents expressed openness to adoption and child fostering as biblically valid alternatives. Some cited biblical examples such as Moses (adopted by Pharaoh's daughter) and Jesus (son of Joseph by legal adoption) as theological justifications.¹⁸

Contextual and Ethical Dimensions of Artificial Insemination in the Christ Apostolic Church

The discourse surrounding artificial insemination (AI) within the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) cannot be fully comprehended without a critical examination of the multifaceted contextual and ethical dimensions that shape its reception. This analysis extends beyond a mere theological debate to encompass the intricate interplay of denominational identity, gender dynamics, bioethical concerns, and evolving conceptions of family, all of which are pivotal in understanding the perceptions of AI among members of the CAC Oke-Ife DCC Headquarters in Ibadan.

A foundational aspect of this inquiry is the unique theological and cultural identity of the CAC. As a denomination rooted in the Aladura movement, the CAC is characterised by a profound emphasis on divine healing, scriptural literalism, and the belief in God's direct intervention in human affairs.¹⁹ This theological posture often fosters a worldview that is sceptical of medical interventions, particularly in areas perceived as sacred, such as procreation.

The prioritisation of faith over science in matters of health and fertility creates a significant tension when confronted with technologies like AI. For many members, the decision to pursue AI is not merely a medical choice but a spiritual one, fraught with questions about the limits of human agency and the nature of divine providence. The very act of seeking a technological solution to infertility can be interpreted as a deficiency in faith, a failure to trust in God's timing and sovereignty. This context is crucial, as it frames AI not as a neutral medical procedure but as a

¹⁷ John Jefferson Davis, *Issues Facing the Church Today: Evangelical Ethics (3rd Ed.)*. (P&R Publishing, 2004).

¹⁸ Judson Taylor Landis and Mary G. Landis, *Building a Successful Marriage* (Prentice-Hall, 1968).

¹⁹ Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

potential challenge to core ecclesial values, thereby explaining the hesitancy and resistance observed in the study. This "faith-healing" paradigm, common in many African Initiated Churches, often positions modern medicine as a secondary or even competing source of authority to divine power.²⁰ The CAC's Holiness-Pentecostal heritage further reinforces this by emphasising sanctification and separation from the world, which can include a suspicion of secular medical practices.²¹

Furthermore, the issue of infertility is deeply gendered within the socio-cultural fabric of many African Christian communities, and the CAC is no exception. Despite medical advancements that have established male-factor infertility as a significant contributor to childlessness, the social and spiritual burden of blame is disproportionately placed on women.²² This gendered experience of infertility exacerbates the psychological and emotional distress associated with childlessness and profoundly influences how AI is perceived. For women, AI may be seen as a pathway to redemption from social stigma and a means to reclaim their identity as wives and potential mothers.

For men, the use of AI, particularly if it involves a donor, may raise concerns about paternity, lineage, and the preservation of family honour. This asymmetry in the experience of infertility means that the perception of AI is likely to differ significantly between male and female congregants, with women potentially being more open to its use as a means of alleviating their social and spiritual burden, while men may be more concerned with issues of biological paternity and marital fidelity. This aligns with broader anthropological findings that in many patriarchal societies, a woman's status and security are intrinsically linked to her reproductive capacity.²³ The study by Igbolekwu *et al.* confirms that in South-West Nigeria, cultural interpretations of AI are heavily influenced by these patriarchal norms, where a woman's worth is often measured by her ability to bear children.²⁴

²⁰ Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*.

²¹ M.A. Ojo, *The Aladura Movement: A Sociological Study of Religious Development in South-Western Nigeria* (Peter Lang, 2008).

²² C.I. Okafor et al., "Gender Dynamics in Infertility Management in Nigeria," *Nigerian Medical Journal* 63, no. 3 (2022): 189–95.

²³ Inhorn and Patrizio, "Rethinking Reproductive 'Tourism' as Reproductive 'Exile.'"

²⁴ Chisaa Onyekachi Igbolekwu et al., "Religious and Cultural Interpretations of Artificial Insemination in South-West Nigeria," *AJOG Global Reports* 3, no. 2 (2023): 100113, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xagr.2022.100113>.

A central ethical dilemma in the discourse on AI is the practice of donor insemination and the associated issue of donor anonymity. The use of a third-party gamete introduces profound moral and familial complications that are deeply unsettling within the CAC's theological framework. The primary concern, as highlighted by a significant majority of respondents, is the potential for a donor-conceived child to be unaware of their biological father.²⁵ This raises serious questions about identity, lineage, and the integrity of the family unit. In a culture where genealogy and ancestry are of paramount importance, the introduction of an anonymous genetic contributor can be seen as disrupting the divine order of family and kinship. There is also a tangible fear of future consanguineous relationships where individuals unknowingly marry biological relatives further amplifying the ethical objections.

The lack of a clear legal and ecclesiastical framework in Nigeria to regulate donor conception only serves to deepen this anxiety, leaving individuals to navigate these complex moral waters without adequate guidance. The principle of marital unity, derived from Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:6, which states that a man and woman become "one flesh," is often cited as a theological objection to the introduction of a third party's genetic material into the marital union.²⁶ This concern is not unique to the CAC; many Christian traditions, including the Catholic Church, have expressed similar reservations about the potential for donor insemination to undermine the integrity of the marriage covenant.²⁷ The policy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which opposes AI with sperm from anyone other than the husband, reflects a similar commitment to marital fidelity in procreation.²⁸

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that perceptions of artificial insemination among members of the Christ Apostolic Church, Oke-Ife DCC, are shaped by a complex interplay of faith, ethics, and cultural expectations. While there is growing recognition of AI as a medical advancement, significant theological reservations persist, particularly regarding faith, marital fidelity, and divine

²⁵ Bernard Morris Dickens and Rebecca J Cook, "Ethical Issues in Donor Conception," *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics* 154, no. 1 (2021): 1–6.

²⁶ Meilaender, *Bioethics : A Primer for Christians, 3rd Edition*.

²⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith., *Donum Vitae: On the Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and the Dignity of Procreation* (Vatican Press, 1987).

²⁸ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Divine Institution of Marriage* (2008), <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics/facts-and-statistics-index/divine-institution-of-marriage>.

sovereignty. The findings suggest that many believers are not outright rejecting AI but are seeking a theologically coherent framework within which to evaluate it. This indicates a need for deeper pastoral and theological engagement with bioethical issues, moving beyond simplistic binaries of “sin” or “science.” The research affirms that infertility is not merely a medical issue but a spiritual and communal crisis requiring compassionate, informed, and contextually sensitive responses. As reproductive technologies become more accessible, the church must develop doctrines and pastoral practices that uphold both biblical integrity and human dignity.

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