

The Socio-Economic Impact of Population Growth on Sustainable Development of Nigeria

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Abstract

Population growth has a direct impact on the development of any nation. In fact, it is one of the major factors that determines the level of development, the per capita income, and the structure of the population. It has become established that the existence of an efficient and effective human capital is the key to economic growth and development in any nation. The level of economic growth of a nation is dependent on the growth and development of the population. This paper evaluates the socio-economic impact of population growth on sustainable development. It highlights the effect of population on environment and moreover government policy on population growth. The paper also examines method of disseminating ideas through which population could be developed to bring about economic development. The strategies include mass educations strategies, reducing illiteracy to zero level, technical education that will make the citizens more productive and practical in nature. In addition, this paper highlights, how the mass media could be used to encourage small family size. The effects of population growth, the relationship between population growth and economic growth. How population growth could in a way retard economic development. Recommendations are also made.

Keywords: Socio-Economic, Population Growth, Sustainable development

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Background to the Study

Nigeria has abundant human and natural resources that if well harnessed would have led to high living standard. Nigeria is one of the most populous country in the world with a population of about 140 million (2006 Population Census). The population of Nigeria is rapidly growing without an equivalent growth in socio-economic development. Increase in population raises population pressure on arable land and reduces land-man ratio. This phenomenon causes lower productivity per person and breeds up unemployment and poverty. With the absence of effective human capital development, an increasing population could have adverse effect on the economic growth of a nation. It is important to note that by economic development, we do not only refer to increase on national income (GNP) or per capita income but also reduction in unemployment as a result of the growth of employment opportunities and reduction in poverty and inequalities of income. There is a vital need to balance population with resources in order to have sustainable development.

According to Thomas Malthus in his 1826 model which stated that the population level can reduce the output per capital because population increases at a geometric rate while production rises of an arithmetic rate so that output and growth rate cannot keep the same pace.

The population of Nigeria in 1963 was 55.56 million but in 2006, it was 140 million. It has been estimated to be 170 million presently by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). This indicates the rapid growth of Nigerian's population at a population growth rate of 2.8 percent per annum. Rapid population growth in Nigeria is equally associated with unemployment with figures ranging from 17 percent per annum for the entire population to 60 percent for the youths because job opportunities are fewer than the number seeking for them, and stagnating economic performance because a large proportion of available resources is consumed instead of being invested to generate growth (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Sustainable development can only be achieved when the resources, especially the value of human resources is realized and adequate measures are taken to ensure an all-round development by involving all stakeholders on the need for mass education. In the early 70's China used to be one of the countries that looked up to the United Kingdom and United State of America for their manufactured goods. The reverse is the case now as China is one of the countries known for manufacturing at a very large scale. Large scale manufacturing skyrocket their exportation and improve their income productivity.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development involves meeting the need of present generations and improves their quality of life in ways that do not compromise future generations' ability to meet their own needs. Widespread poverty, environmental conditions, the use of natural resources and economic and social development are closely linked to population growth and distribution. Ensuring that population and development strategies acknowledge these links and address the full range of related issues is a key objective of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Reasons for Rapid Population Growth

Three major factors propel population growth namely: increase in birth rate, decrease in death rate and migration. The 2006 population census gave 140 million as the population of Nigeria with a growth rate of 3.02% per annum. This portrays the fact that Nigeria's population could double in less than 25 years. The improved medical services and facilities is one of the reasons that generated increase in birth rate and reduce the death rate. There are better although not adequate medical services and facilities. Immunization services have greatly reduced infant, child, maternal and other forms of mortality which all result in high birth rate.

Furthermore, social factors contributes to the increase in population. Early marriages also lead to high birth rate, women have the opportunity of having many children due to long reproductive years. The preference of male children is another reason for increase in population. As a result of the level of understanding, some couple prefer to have more male children than female. When the male children are not forthcoming, they will continue to have children until they have enough male children that they desire. Wealth has also encouraged many people to have large families and these results to high birth rate.

Another important factor that is considered in having a large family is old age security. This encourages people to have large families. People want to have many children so that these children would provide for them when they are old. They believe the more the children, the more the guarantee of better life at old age.

In Africa, religion, superstition and customs play a major role in population growth. Islam for instance favours polygamy which allows men to have up to four wives. The factors that reduces death rate include improvement in medicine, hygiene, and increase in the level of living standards.

Effects of Population Growth on Economic Development

For any nation to have meaningful economic development, the labour force must be in the right quantity and quality. The number is very important as large population size would not only provide the labour required but also the robust market for the produced goods.

Although in less developed economies, relatively rapid population growth almost always results in a fall in the standard of living due to the rather severe limits to the technical progress in agriculture or to the fixed supply of land. This was pointed by Malthus (1798). However, high population growth rates in developing countries, since the middle of the twentieth century have had little effect on per capita GDP growth.

Kelley (1988) was of the opinion that population growth may have had a positive impact on per capita (GDP) growth in the long run through improvement of productivity through the contribution of new ideas resulting from increased production volume. The current consensus is that, as more data become available, rapid population growth has exerted a significant negative effect on economic growth in developing countries (Sachs, 2008).

Research work by economist Allen Kelley indicates that during the 1980's population growth, on the average acted as a brake on economic growth as measured by the growth rate of per capita gross domestic product. The growth of gross domestic product could be hindered by high dependency ratios that emerge when rapid population growth produces large proportion of children and youth relative to the labour force.

From the 2006 population census, Nigeria has a population of 140 million, the composition of this population is mainly in the youthful category with 49% being youths. The high dependency ratio places much burden on the population. The effects of population growth on economic development include:

Economic Growth

Rapid population growth lowers per capita income as much burden lies on the working class. This happens as a result of the fact that they are poor, dependent on agriculture and experiencing pressures on land and natural resources.

Education

It is generally believed that the main reason why some children are deprived of being educated is as a result of the size of the family. Large family size and low incomes restrict the opportunities of parents to educate all their children. Rapid population growth at the national level, causes given educational expenditures to be spread more thinly, lowering quality for the sake of quantity.

Poverty and inequality

The financial strength of each family affects the overall development of an area. The negative consequence of rapid population growth falls most heavily on the poor because they suffer first from cuts in government health and education program. In addition, they bear the brunt of governmental damage, and are the main victims of job cuts due to the slower growth of the economy. Even women of very poor financial status bear the burden of the government austerity programme and another vicious cycle is set in motion. Large families perpetuate poverty.

Health

There is an adage that health is wealth. High fertility harms the health of mother and children. It increases the health risk of pregnancy and closed spaced birth have been shown to reduce birth weight.

Food

Increase in population also increases the demand for food requirements. Feeding the world's population is made more difficult by rapid population growth. New technologies of production must be introduced in order to meet the demand.

Environment

The population exerts pressure on the environment which is the main reason for environmental degradation. This happens in form of deforestation, soil erosion, declining

fish and animal stocks, inadequate and unsafe water, air pollution and urban congestion. Environmental recovery is very necessary in order not to jeopardize the work of future generations.

Government Policy on Population Growth

Nigeria adopted the National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development (NPP) in 2004 with an end date of 2015 for most of its target. The policy aimed to improve standards of living and quality of life of Nigerian people by addressing the complex inter-relationship between population and development.

Specific interventions for nine thematic areas were identified as key to Nigerians' sustainable development. The Strategic Plan for National Population Policy was launched in 2008 specifying activities, responsible agencies and resources required for implementation. Rapid population growth, poor health and education outgrows the need align approaches with the sustainable development goals, and the policy's looming end-date necessitated the need for review and revision.

The Policy Section is responsible for monitoring of government views and policies on key population issues, such as population size and growth, population age structure, fertility, reproductive health and family planning, health and mortality spatial distribution and international migration.

The government had always made efforts to influence the population variables prior to this time. Efforts have not actually achieved the desired results, because many have not realized the implications of uncontrolled birth. The policy, "Nigeria Policy on Population for Unity, Progress and Self-reliance" was introduced after the approval of the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). This was proof of Government's frantic effort and concern about family planning as part of overall socio-economic development of the country. The Head of State and Government emphasized the need for the policy (Federal Ministry of Health, 1985).

In 2003, another Policy was introduced by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration, known as "Nigeria Policy on Population for Sustainable Development. The population growth rate in 1991 was 2.82 percent, while in 2006, it was 3.02 percent. This was a clear indication that the policy has little or no influence on the people. The two policies did not yield the expected result.

The Nigerian population is growing rapidly and the rate of growth in 2006 was higher than that of 1991. The policies have not achieved the stated aims and objectives (Ebigbola, 1988). There were many factors that militated against achieving success and proper functioning of the Population Policy Programmes.

The cultural factor serves as bottle neck towards the realization of the objective and effective implementation of the Population Policy Programme in Nigeria. Although the policy was voluntary in nature as couples were given the freewill and only encouraged to have the number of children they can adequately care for.

All couples have basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of children. In Christianity, the priests are always silent over family planning and in some cases kick against it. Also in Islam, there is a prevalence of polygamy, which allows a man to marry more than one wife. The policy advocated four children per woman rather than four children by couple. With this practice, the policy is rendered ineffective in all ramifications. The fact that Islam does not support fixing of marriage of 18 years or more is another obstacle to population policy. The programme cannot be implemented wholly or in part especially in Muslim community of the north due to this belief.

In general, abject poverty do push some parents to give their under-age daughters in marriage just to reduce the family burden. All these practices renders the policy impotent. Moreover, there is a wide belief that the male children are the pillars of the family and object of perpetuation of the family lineage. This is a propelling force why many families strife to have many male children regardless of the number of females they've had.

There is no legal backing, sanction or compliance, since the policy was voluntary in nature. Some other countries such as China have standing rules for population planning. China's one child policy was part of a birth planning programme designed to control the size of its population. This is distinct from the family planning policies of most other countries (which focus on providing contraceptive options to help women have the number of children they want), it set a limit on the number of children, parents could have, the world's most extreme example of population planning. It was introduced in 1979 (after a decade-long two-child policy) modified in the mid-1980s to allow rural parents a second child if the first was a daughter, and then lasted three more decades before being eliminated at the end of 2015. The policy also allowed exceptions for some other groups including ethnic minorities.

Provincial government could and did require the use of contraception, sterilizations and abortions to ensure compliance, and imposed enormous fines for violations. Local and national governments created commissions to raise awareness and carry out registration and inspection work. China also rewards family with only one child. From 1982 onwards, in accordance with the instructions on further family planning issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in that year, regulations awarded 5 yuan per month for only children. Parents who had only one child would also get a one-child glory certificate.

The change of government in Nigeria is another serious impediment. Every government wants to be the architect of a new policy. For political reasons, there is no continuity or equal zeal to implement the policy on the part of most successive governments (Ebigbola, 1988).

The Socio-economic Impact of Population Growth on Sustainable Development

The impact of population growth on sustainable development occurs in two ways, in developed economic population growth promoted economic development. In developing countries like Nigeria, population growth retards economic development.

Whether or not the growth of population contributes to economic growth depends on the existing size of the population, the available supplies of natural and capital resources and the prevailing technology. In the United States where supplies of natural and capital resources are comparatively abundant, growth in labour force caused by increasing population raises national output.

Growth in population will create a large market for goods and services. There will be high number of consumers, and the demand for food, clothing and shelter will be on the increase. Although demand for materials being used will be on the increase, a rapidly growing population always has large number of children. According to the 2006 population census, 45 percent of the total population falls into 0-18 years age group.

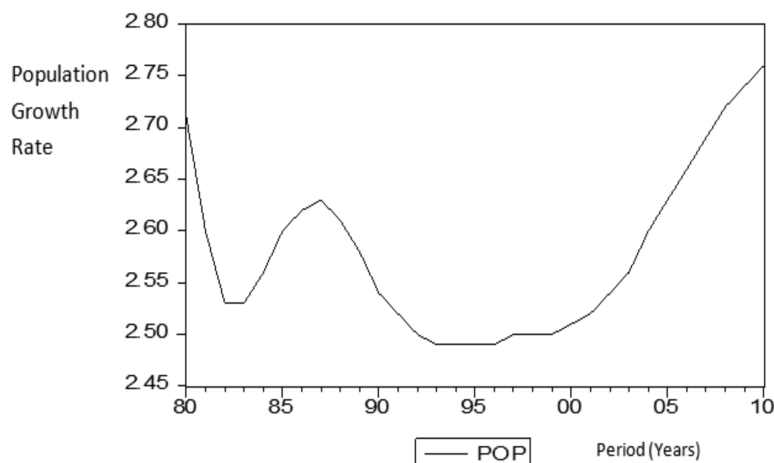


Figure 1: Line graph showing the trend of population growth rate in Nigeria 1980 -2010. (Source: Tartiyuset *al.*, 2015).

Figures 1 clearly shows the trend of population growth rate in Nigeria. The graph shows that the period 1980-1983 was branded by a decreasing rate of population in Nigeria. This period was immediately followed by a rise in the population growth rate of Nigeria in the period 1984 – 1987. The period 1987-1992 is characterized by a steady decline in the growth rate of the Nigerian population. The period 1993-1995 was characterized by an unchanging growth rate in the Nigerian population. And finally, the period 1999-2010 is characterized by a steep increase in the growth rate of the Nigerian population (Tartiyuset *al.*, 2015).

Population could also lead to increase in labour force which is an essential productive resource. By increasing the amount of labour force, population growth will help in producing more output. Population growth brings in more hands to work for production and therefore contributes to economic growth. The impact of population growth on sustainable development could be negative. Jhingen (2005) opined that the effect of population growth on per capita income is unfavourable.

The growth of population tends to retard the per capita income in some ways. Firstly, it increases the pressure of population on land. Secondly, it tends to rise cost of consumption of goods because of the scarcity of the cooperate factors to increase their supply. It also tends to a decline in the accumulation of capital because in family members will increase the expenses.

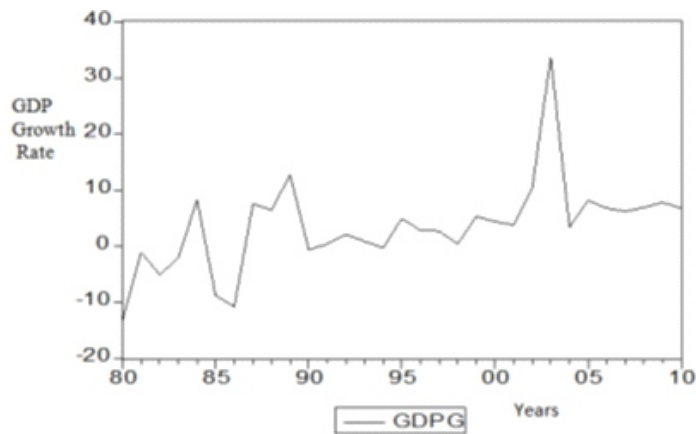


Figure 2: Line graph showing the trend of GDP growth in Nigeria 1980 -2010. (Source: Tartiyuset *al.*, 2015).

The figure above is a line graph showing the trend of the GDP growth rate of Nigeria for the period; 1980-2010. The graphs shows that the GDPG of Nigeria is characterized by skyward and downhill movements. However, the period 2001-2004 was characterized by a step increase in GDPG of Nigeria, which was immediately preceded by a sharp decrease in the GDPG of Nigeria in the period (2004- 2005).

The adverse effects of population growth on per capita income operate more severely if the number of children in the total population is high. This is the case in Nigeria where much importance is attached to the number of children per family. Children involve economic cost in the form of time spent and money expended in bringing them up.

Rapid population growth holds down the level of saving and capital investment in the means of production and thereby limits the rate of growth of gross national product (Adediran, 2012). It is a well-known fact that a growing population will stimulate demand and change investment pattern.

When population growth rate is high, that means that there is a large population of children which in turn means large production of materials needed by the children. The government has to build more schools, more recreational facilities provided, and more health institutions that will treat them.

Increase in population will increase dependency ratio. There will be greater dependants on the working population. The working class will not be able to save for more investment because of this high dependency ratio. This will affect the socioeconomic development of the country. When there is increase in demand without an equivalent increase in production, this brings about high cost of living which is prevalent in Nigeria. The consumption of goods and services will be low per individual. Another issue is that it generates is that many people live in ghetto where the living condition is very poor.

Conclusion

With the interrelationship between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, it calls out for actions aimed at meeting this challenge in three related areas. This includes integrating population and development strategies, population, sustainable economic growth and poverty, population and environment. This government is in the best position to come up with policies aimed at reducing and eliminating unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

Recommendations

Population growth influences the development of any area, it has become imperative for the government to take steps in ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria with the following recommendations:

1. The mass media should be involved in disseminating the implications of uncontrolled birth and how it affects the standard of living.
2. Policies to enhance export should be adopted to promote export growth in Nigeria since it enhances the rate of economic growth.
3. Nigerian economy should be diversify to enhance productivity of labour and economic growth as life expectancy increases.
4. In addition, measure should be adopted to check the crude death rate as it affects economic growth negatively.

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