

An Analysis of the Implications of Rapid Population Growth on Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Population is an asset to every country if properly managed but it becomes otherwise if the level of its growth and means of sustenance do not coincide. In many African countries and Nigeria in particular, the rate at which population is rapidly growing is alarming and worrisome. The population is increasing at geometric rate while the means of survival is increasing at arithmetic rate. This level of population growth has posed a serious threat to development in the country. The paper aimed at ascertaining the implication of rapid population growth on sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper is purely conceptual and review literature concerning the stated problem. It is found from the reviewed literature that, rapid population growth in Nigeria has seriously affected virtually every aspect of our social institutions such as health, education, economy to mention but few. The paper recommended for the effective population policy and to also intensify enlightenment on the importance of contraception in reducing the level of fertility rate.

Keywords: *Population, Rapid Population Growth, Development, Sustainable Development*

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Background to the Study

Sustainable development has become a mirage in virtually most of the developing countries as a result of so many factors. Rapid population growth is one among many factors posing a serious threat to sustainable development in most of the developing countries. Population is an asset if properly managed, but it becomes a serious threat if there is no equal development/increase in the means of sustenance. Rapid population growth (RPG) refers to the state of overpopulation in terms of existing means and resources. When the population growth rate is more than 2% and total fertility rate (TFR) is more than 2.1 per woman, it is known as the condition of rapid population growth (Auwal, 2018). While sustainable development on the other hand, refers to the way how people use the available resources without running out. In other words, sustainable development refers to the development with sustainability that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (Brundland Commission). It simply means the development where the present generation will benefit without compromising the existing resources for the future generation.

Nigeria is said to be the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world with the total growth rate of 2.6% and the total fertility of 5.3 (NDHS, 2018). This rapid increase in population has not geared toward improving the countries' economy hence leading to so many social and environmental problems, thus, high level of childhood malnutrition due to the highest level of unemployment, deforestation, poor electricity, poor modern health facilities, poor portable drinking water, poor standard level of education, increase in crime rate, pollution, erosion and many other socio-economic problems which make the sustainable development unrealistic. It has been pointed out by Malthus that when the population is increasing at geometric rate and the means of sustenance is increasing at arithmetic rate and left unchecked it may lead to adverse consequences to the economy. It has been noted that agriculture is the mainstay of the rural dwellers which facilitated the level of population growth in the country. It is clear that when the flow of wealth is from children to parent then there is every likelihood to experience a higher fertility rate because having many children to work at a farm and other petty businesses are translated as having better economic wellbeing of the family.

Most of the rural areas, the parents have high expectation from their children and spent a little on them. This upward flow of wealth from children to parent has significantly contributed to the high level of population growth in Nigeria (Ahmad, 2017). The little development in the health care service delivery has reduced the level of mortality, while religion and cultural tradition especially in rural areas have become a serious threat to contraceptive use, male child preference and patriarchal nature of the country which exempted women from the family reproductive decision making also contributed to this menace of rapid increase in population. Therefore, for the sustainable development to be possible, the government must double its effort in the provision of basic amenities every year to cater to the need of the populace. This paper, however, is aimed at examining the implication of such rapid population growth on sustainable development and proper a suggestion towards fertility regulation in the country.

Conceptual Clarification

Population

This can be seen as a total number of people living in a particular geographic location sharing certain things in common. It is the number of inhabitants (either the total number or the number of a particular race or class) in a given place (country or city etc.). Population in other word, refers to a collection of people alive at a specific point in time that meets certain criteria. For example, the population of Nigeria as at December 30, 2006, or the population of Hausa in Gombe State on December 30, 2006. Thus, Demographers use the term 'Population' to refer to different kinds of collections that persist through time even though its members are continuously changing through attrition and accession (Preston, Hauveline and Guillot 2001). Therefore, the population is ever-changing in its size, its composition and its growth rates. These changes are related to births, deaths and migrations. Change in populations affects our lives in different ways that may not be seen by mere looking at the population. For instances, due to changes and rapid growth in population in most of the African countries and Nigeria in particular, it is not easily possible for the government to employ all its citizens.

Rapid Population Growth

Rapid population growth (RPG) refers to the state of overpopulation in terms of existing means and resources. When the population growth rate is more than 2% and the total fertility rate (TFR) is more than 2.1 per woman, it is known as the condition of rapid population growth. Nigeria is said to be the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world with the total growth rate of 2.6% and the total fertility of 5.3 (NDHS, 2018). This rapid increase in population has not geared toward improving the countries' economy hence leading to so many social and environmental problem, thus, high level of children malnutrition due to the highest level of unemployment, deforestation, poor electricity, poor modern health facilities, poor portable drinking water, poor standard level of education, high level of crime, pollution, erosion and many other socio-economic problem which make the sustainable development unrealistic. It has been pointed out by Malthus that when the population is increasing at a geometric rate and the means of sustenance is increasing at an arithmetic rate and left unchecked it may lead to adverse consequences to the economy. Rapid population growth posed a serious threat to development in most of the African countries and this has contributed to so many challenges in the affected countries. For development to be possible in African Countries and Nigeria in particular the issue of high increase in population has to be tackled or the government must double its existing resources in every year to cater for the needs and demand of its population.

Development

Development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social and demographic components. The purpose of development is a rise in the level and quality of life of the population, and the creation or expansion of local regional income and employment opportunities, without damaging the resources of the environment. Development is visible and useful, not necessarily

immediately, and includes an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change. Development is both Qualitative and Quantitative which means a country cannot be considered as developed only because of the existing infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, recreational centres to mention but few without the equivalent development in the quality of lives of its citizens, such as life expectancy, the standard of living, human development etc. Development means having both good and standard basic amenities that could cater for the demand of the population in line with the good quality of life, good standard of living, life expectancy and human development (Auwal, 2016). In most of the African countries, the basic amenities are nearly not in existence or bad shape with very poor quality of life and standard of living. In Nigeria, the vast majority of the population are living below the poverty line with poor health facilities, poor schools and so many environmental problems such as deforestation, erosion, flooding, desertification because of the high number of population and the government could not tackle these issues because of the large number of population. If the government could not be able to provide gas, kerosine at an affordable price to its citizens, the issues of environmental problems could not be addressed.

Sustainable Development

Although there are many definitions of sustainable development, the most used definition is that of the Brundland Commission (Cherin, 2006: Stoddart, 2011). Sustainable development means the development with sustainability that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. This definition stresses the significance of intergenerational equity. This issue of reserving resources for the future generation is what makes the development to be sustainable. Any development that cannot be stable for a longer period will not be considered as sustainable development. The overall aim of sustainable development is the long term stability of the economy and environment. This can only be possible when there is an integration of economic, social and environmental concerns throughout the decision-making process. If the economic, social and environmental issues have not been put into consideration by the government in its decision-making process then the sustainable development can never be achieved. In most of the developing countries least concern has been giving to most especially environmental and social issues. These, therefore, make the available resources to be overused and ran out by the present generation which compromised the opportunity of the future generation. This has generated the problem of desertification due to the highest level of deforestation because the bulk majority of the population heavenly rely on the use of firewood.

Nexus Between Rapid Population Growth and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

While the population is considered as an asset and resources to every country but if it is level of growth is not properly managed, it could become a serious threat to the country. In so many years, the population in most of the African countries is not in consistency with the social, environmental and economic development of the countries. For example, the United Nations Human Development Index 2017 ranked Nigeria 157 out of 189 countries and among the 10 poorest nations in the world. Currently, Nigeria has

overtaken India with about 86.9 million people living in extreme poverty which is 50% of its estimated population of 180 million populations (World Poverty Clock, 2019). The implications of rapid population growth need to be considered in the effort of every government or country to achieve sustainable development. Rapid population growth has serious implications on the following sectors;

1. Education: education is one of the many sectors that have been suffering from the consequences of rapid population growth. Thus, the number of people requiring for admission at primary, secondary and tertiary levels have significantly increased but there is no equal increase in the number of schools, and the available schools cannot accommodate all. The capacities of the present classes and other facilities have been exhausted and not sufficient already which increase a large number of dilapidated buildings at both levels. In so many cases, you will find out that a hundred of students are accommodated in a single class. Research by better education service delivery for all indicated that there are more than 13.5 million out of school children in Nigeria, in Gombe alone, there are more than 500,000 out of school children. In Gombe State University alone more than 10,000 people applied for admission every year but the capacity of the school cannot admit more than 4000 students. It is important to note that education is critical to sustained development. Year in year out there is a high increase in illiteracy level in the country, which is a limiting factor to sustainable development. The educational system suffers from deteriorating quality and insufficient investment to keep pace with the country's burgeoning school-age population. This is why the government replaced the Universal Primary Education with the Universal Basic Education Programme. The enrolment of children into a basic education programme in the year 2000 was 2.3 million, this increase to 2.9 million in 2005. The expanding enrolment in school has led to a drastic reduction of teachers to pupil ratio, overcrowded classrooms, shortage of educational materials as well as a serious need for better funding of the education sector.

2. Health: health sector is among the various sectors that have been seriously suffering from the negative impacts of rapid population growth. It is evident that the bulk majority of Nigeria's population are living in the rural communities; the health care facilities are virtually none in existence in most of the rural areas or are in bad shape. The insufficiency and/or nonexistence of such facilities have seriously contributed to the problems of such areas thereby increasing the rate of maternal morbidity and mortality, child mortality from many preventable diseases. Also, in urban centres, the health care facilities are not adequate to cater to the health need of the people. In most cases, patients would go to the hospitals and find out that there is no bed space to admit them, there are not qualitative modern facilities to cure their illnesses, and this is one of the reasons why even the leaders are going to other countries to seek for medical treatment.

3. Environment: this is another area that has been seriously suffering from devastating population growth. The price of kerosene and gas are exorbitant to the extent that a common man cannot afford, this hike in the prices of kerosene and gas is what makes the majority of the population to rely on either charcoal or firewood for their day to

day cooking and other activities, this, in essence, has contributed to so many challenges of deforestation, desertification, flooding, erosion and so many other environmental problems. Though, the government has made so many efforts to avert these problems such as Nigerian Erosion and Watershed Management (NEWMAP), tree planting project and many others. Recently, the present administration in Gombe has introduced the program titled: Gombe Goes Green (G3) targeting to plant four million trees within four years. Off course such programs will help but only if the government can provide adequate and affordable gas and kerosene that even a common man can afford. Our environment is also suffering in the rural areas from the problems of overgrazing, over-cultivation, land fragmentation and many other factors that compounded the challenges faced by our nowadays environment as a result of the rapid increase in population. The overall impact is the continued degradation of the ecosystem. Thus, if rapid population growth is not properly managed, the situation of the environment will further worsen.

4. Housing: A significant per cent of Nigerians do not have standard, conducive and comfortable houses due to the scarcity of land in the urban centres. Many citizens in the urban centres are living in a rent paying a huge amount of money annually. This is because of the overcrowding in the urban centres because of a rapid increase in population. Thus, Housing is one of the necessities of life. In Nigeria, federal government has employed the National Housing Policy which clearly stated that every Nigerian should have access to adequate shelter as a right. Thus, the story is totally different because in the urban centres the major problems are a shortage of housing, overpopulation, overcrowding and the widespread of slums and shantytowns. In the rural areas, the houses are poorly constructed, unsafe and lack basic amenities such as electricity, good roads, portable drinking water, and many other necessities of life. The rapid rate of population growth in both the rural and urban centres has become a stabling block to the effective implementation of housing policy which makes it difficult to provide adequate and sufficient housing to the citizens to make up for the current shortfalls and to provide adequately for the ever-increasing population (NPPSD, 2004).

5. Poverty: poverty is one of the serious problems affecting our societies thereby causing a lot of menace such as the high rate of crime as the issue of kidnapping, Boko haram, arm robbery, street hawking, out of school children, illiteracy, and the school dropped out children to mention but few. The family is the basic unit of reproduction and production in every society. The influence of the family's reproductive behaviour largely influences the growth rate of the population; its productive capacity determines the nation's wealth. Population size, growth rate and structure impact on the level of welfare of individuals and households. With limited resources, high fertility undermines saving and makes it increasingly difficult for families to adequately feed, clothe, house, educate and provide medical care for their children. In some rural areas, families with large numbers of children and where the traditional practices of dividing land at generation exist, this led to further fragmentation of small individuals' farm holdings leading to low yield and low income. In a situation of widespread poverty, the high population growth rate is most unlikely to stimulate production and demand for goods and services because such a population lacks purchasing power.

6. Labour force and employment: labour force and employment have also been suffering from the bedevilling rapid increase in population. Year in year out, the number of people graduating from the tertiary institution is highly increasing, thus, the number of people demanding for employment is also increasing. Each year, not less than hundred thousand graduates are doing their one year mandatory National Youth Service (NYSC) while less than twenty percent (20%) may likely get government employment because the capacity of the government employees cannot be absorbed. Though it is evident that the population is the primary asset of the nation, the policy opines that rapid population growth place extraordinary demands on the ability of the economy to provide jobs for all new entrants to the labour force. With the high rate of population growth, the number of people in need of employment will rise dramatically each year. It will be difficult to create enough jobs for such large numbers of people even with government policy of job creation through different initiatives. It is important to note that employment itself is a component of development.

7. Water and sanitation: many of the families here in Nigeria are living below the poverty line which prevented most from affording nutritious food. This has resulted in the widespread hunger and other related diseases. The high rate of population growth has affected the quality and quantity of food at the household level resulting in food insecurity in some communities. The large family size and poverty have increased vulnerability, and have hindered households from providing adequate nutrition for themselves particularly women and children. This has resulted in widespread malnutrition such that many children below five years are stunted. The situation of high malnutrition has been attributed to negative cultural practices, lack of knowledge, such as low education of the population, especially for mothers, large family size, low income, inadequate food security and lack of food storage facilities, poor distribution and marketing system which occurred as a result of rapid population growth.

8. Energy Resources: Rapid population growth has also adversely affected Nigeria's energy sector. Virtually all the rural dwellers largely rely on wood as their sources of energy and also the bulk majority of the urban people still rely on wood. At recent, there is a serious imbalance between the demand for wood and its supply. This has led to the massive destruction of the existing forest thereby causing a lot of environmental problems such as desertification, erosion, flooding, deforestation and many more. With this rapid increase in population, the demand for wood as the major source of energy will increase thereby posing a serious threat to our environment.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is a high increase in population in most of the African countries and Nigeria in Particular which causes a serious threat to sustainable development. While the population is an asset to every nation but when it is level of growth is not properly managed, it becomes a serious obstacle to the effort of government in improving the quality of life and standard of living of its citizen. Such a rapid increase in population created soma many challenges to our education, environment, housing, energy

resources, Health and many other sectors. Sustainable development would forever remain a mirage if such level of population growth remains unchecked.

Recommendations

1. It is therefore recommended the need for civic education and enlightenment targeting the practices that encouraged having a large number of children. For this rapid population growth to be slowed, this culture of having many children most especially in the rural areas must be broken.
2. There is also a need for awareness and enlightenment about the use of contraceptive. Most people especially in the rural areas do not accept the use of contraceptives. Therefore, the government needs to double its effort in creating so many programs emphasizing the need and importance of the use of contraception. Contraceptives also need to be made available and accessible in every nook and crannies of the country.
3. There is also a need to create a lot of skills acquisition centres across the country where youth will be trained on various skills which will make self-reliant. Creating many skills acquisitions centres will reduce the burden on the government in employing so many youths of reproductive age; it will also reduce poverty and the dependency level of the population.
4. There is also a need for the effective population policy that will regulate the level of fertility to minimize the level of population growth. There is a need for enforcing the policy on the citizen and a sanction on whoever violates the policy.
5. However, the challenges before the development planners, government and other corporate institutions are to strategize on civic education and public enlightenment at all levels on the place of education in national development. The girl child education should also be encouraged.

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