POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OR POPULATION MANAGEMENT?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a contribution to the debate on the link between population and development with specific reference to Ghana. Classical, Marxist and Modernist economic theories acknowledge the link between population and development. While classical theory is pessimistic about the impact of population pressure on national prosperity, the Marxist and some Modernist theories such as the 'Lewis model' are optimistic that population pressure could result in output expansion. What ever the view, Ghana's development policy generally integrates population management into development programming. But evidence suggests that the grounds of rural localities may not be fertile enough for the success of such programmes. Extreme poverty, low literacy and low levels of modernity and enlightenment could make investment in population management fruitless. If the argument that a basic level of socio-economic development is necessary for successful population management holds, then there is the need for an in-depth evaluation of the costs and benefits of population management programmes in rural localities. There is the need to rethink whether to focus national policy on direct development indicators in some localities. These are the outcomes of a review of secondary information supplemented with evidence from a focus group discussion with women from a typical rural community in Northern Ghana.

KEY DESCRIPTORS: Malthusian Theory, Demographic Transition Theory, Population Management, Socio-economic Development, Rural Localities.

INTRODUCTION

Population growth has strong linkages with socio-economic development as it is the only source of additional labour for productivity. However, considering the importance of labour quality, aside quantity, in the combination of productive inputs, population growth beyond a certain rate may not be desirous. For instance, Ghana's National Development Policy Framework (2006-2009) suggests that population growth rates above two (2) percent is counter productive to economic growth and socio-economic development (Republic of Ghana, 2005). According to Goran (1967) less than five US dollars ($5) investment in population management is worth a $100 investment in economic growth.

Ghana's population has increased from 6.7 million in 1960 to 18,912,079 in 2000. However, the rate of growth has decelerated from about 3 percent in 1994 to 2.7 percent in 2000. In spite of the decreased rate of growth, the dependency ratio is 48.5%. For a low income economy like Ghana, this ratio can impede savings mobilization for socio-economic development (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002, 2005).

For these reasons, the Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006-2009) outlined population management as a major strategy (Republic of Ghana, 2005). This has been characteristic of any Ghanaian development strategies since 1966. According to Kumekpor and Batse (1991) Ghana was the third country in Sub-Saharan Africa to formulate a population policy in 1969.

The link between population and development has been acknowledged by both classical and modern economic theory. Nevertheless, there is variation in opinions on the ultimate consequences of population pressure on the national economy.

Building on the Labour Theory of Value, Classical Theory identifies labour and capital as the crucial ingredients in national output growth. The importance of population growth further lies in the fact that the earnings of labour in the production process also serve as a catalyst for further productivity as their consumption provokes investment. Therefore, increases in population imply increases in labour which can be employed to increase output (Todaro, 2000). The significance of population in national output growth is also underscored by Lenin that, "the primary productive force of human society as a whole is the workers, the working people" (Valentey, 1980:10).

However, the Theory cautions that beyond a certain quantity of labour in combination with other inputs, marginal productivity tends to be negative. At such stages, decreasing population is desirable for socio-economic development. Of course, the theory assumes relative fixity in natural resources and technology.

On the other hand, modern theories such as the 'Lewis model' of economic development suggest that rapid population growth can still be a credit to growth and development because of the contrasting features of the traditional agrarian sector on one hand and the modern (industrial and service) sector on the other hand. The Theory postulates that rapid output expansion could be realized through transfer of surplus labour from the traditional agrarian sector to the modern sector because population pressure could result in zero marginal productivity of labour in agriculture. Therefore, output in agriculture would not fall but the transfer to the modern sector could increase output in industry and services. Population pressure could thus result in economic growth (Todaro, 2000).

This postulation is not far-fetched considering the fact that a relaxation of the classical assumption of fixity in technology could lead to improvement in agricultural output and trigger the movement of labour to other sectors (UNDP, 1998). Similarly, the

mercantilists also viewed population as a very important factor in the multiplication of wealth. The growth of one of the two (population and wealth) with appropriate guidance from the state was regarded as a catalyst to the growth of the other. Therefore, mercantilists were generally in favour of population growth (Valentey, 1980).

In this regard, there is no fast rule on the link between population growth and socio-economic development. This paper presents a brief review of the debate on whether to focus policy on direct socio-economic development on one hand or integrate population management into such programmes on the other hand. The paper also evaluates the Ghanaian experience using secondary data and information from a focus group discussion with selected women of Kparigu in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region.

The next (second) section entails a review of the debate on whether to pursue strictly socio-economic development or to pursue socio-economic development with population management alongside. The third section focuses on the evaluation of the evidence in the light of this debate while the last (fourth) section presents the relevant conclusions and recommendations.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OR POPULATION MANAGEMENT?

There is a controversy over whether to apply scarce national resources to programmes that impact on socio-economic development indicators only or to apportion such resources to population management as well (Robinson, 1972; Lewis, 1955; Chong, 1984). The Malthusian Theory of Population, for instance, predicts that population growth will outstrip food production if unchecked. The Malthusian Theory posited by Thomas Robert Malthus in 1798 constitutes a significant component of classical theory. It proceeds from two basic assumptions that:

- Food is necessary for the existence of man(sic); and
- The passion between the two sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state.

From the above assumptions, Malthus concludes that population when unchecked increases in a geometrical ratio (1,2,4,8,16,32,64,128,256,512) while food production increases in an arithmetical ratio (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10). Therefore, the power of population is indefinitely greater than the capacity to produce for the subsistence of the population (Malthus, 1926). Malthus sounded an alarm of the danger of natural checks such as famine, disease and violent conflicts as a result of population pressure. Therefore, population control measures are strongly recommended by the Malthusian Theory.

However, the Demographic Transition Theory (DTT) and the Marxist Theory expose the issue of strict socio-economic development or population management to further debate. The two theories expose the issue to much controversy.

The Demographic Transition Theory

Demographic Transition is a period of rapid population growth between a tradi-tional, stable population characterized by high birth and death rates and later, mod-ern, stable population marked by low fertility and mortality (Nafziger, 1984). Hence, the DTT postulates four stages of population growth for a given economy. These are the early stable, early expanding, late expanding and late stable stages.

Early stable Stage

This stage is characterized by high birth and death rates with the former relatively stable, and the latter fluctuating in response to varying circumstances (Robinson, 1972). Life expectancy could be as low as 30 years as famine disease and war act to punctuate population growth. Population is therefore relatively stable at this stage.

Early Expanding Stage

While birth rates remain relatively high, death rates fall rapidly as a result of ad-vances in health, nutrition, sanitation, transportation, communication, production and commerce. Hence, population expands rapidly at this stage.

Late Expanding stage

At this stage, the birth rate begins to fall but lags behind the death rate. This could be due to the increased use of contraceptives and birth control measures as a result of rising cost of children, high aspirations, changing values and social structure, educa-tion and economic development. Although the population still increases, the expan-sion is relatively steady.

Late Stable stage

As further reduction of the death rate becomes harder to attain, the birth rate ap-proaches equality with it resulting eventually in stationary population. The continu-ous decline of the birth rate up to this stage is motivated by low risks of mortality and availability of social safety nets as well as aspirations for the comfort of modernity.

The Relationship between the Four Stages and Development

The four stages of the Demographic Transition Theory conform somehow, with the classification of countries according to their stages of development. The description of the first stage fits the characteristics of a 'primitive' economy with very little or no

exposure to science and technology. Hence, birth rates are strictly natural and death rates absolutely controlled by natural and human calamites. It is observed that the features of Western Europe prior to the fourteenth century qualify for this description (Nafziger, 1984).

Similarly, it has been observed that the second stage conforms to the growth and development features of the so–called developing countries (including Ghana). The third stage matches the description of the middle income countries. Finally, the features of the fourth stage fit the experience of most countries whose economies have undergone re-organization to the extent that they are referred to as developed (Robinson, 1972).

The Marxist Theory of Population

Marxists oppose the law of diminishing returns which supports the Malthusian Theory in the sense that it is not a natural law but a question of land utilization and the social structure of society. They contend that it is the modus operandi of capitalism that creates surplus labour and overpopulation in order to keep wages down (Valentey, 1980).

Marxists suggest that with appropriate socio-economic development policies, living conditions would improve. Therefore, there is no need for intervention with demographic trends (Valentey, 1980; Kumekpor & Batse, 1991). Hence, the emphasis on birth control as a major goal of state policy is regarded by Marxists as a reductionist view of Bourgeois demographers because in the view of the Marxists, the complex question of developing countries is reduced to the question of excess numbers.

Chong ((1984) suggests that population control programmes can play only a limited role in improving human well-being and that focus should rather be on better management and development of human resources. According to Chong (ibid) the worst fed populations are not always the most crowded.

Relevance of the Demographic Transition and Marxists Ttheories to population and Development

The two theories outlined above provide useful insights into the population and development debate. The DTT for instance suggests that with 'primitive' populations a first step towards improved conditions tends to stimulate population growth. However, further improvements in comfort, education and transformation of values, tend to encourage restraint in births and thus slow down population growth. This implies that as an economy progresses from the 'primitive' stage towards development, population will automatically increase rapidly before becoming stable. Hence, an attempt to control population at such a stage could be highly expensive in terms of the direct socio-economic development that will have to be forgone. The population automatically controls its own growth as the economy attains a certain stage of devel-

opment. But the unresolved puzzle is how to access the means of investment to attain this level of improvement or development that involuntarily controls population growth. It can still be argued that with limited co-operant resources for improved labour productivity, population control remains an option for domestic savings and investments for such improvements. In this regard, Lewis (1955) suggests a simultaneous attack of the problem.

From the Marxists Theory, it implies that the direction of influence of population growth on development depends on the structure of production and distribution. Hence, the relevance of prudent state investment and management guided by the principle of equity is emphasized. The guiding principle of Marxist philosophy of distribution is each according to their need and not their means. By this philosophy, Marxists believe that equitable distribution of resources could make development more feasible than population control.

THE EVIDENCE

In practice, the development policies of many countries combine population management with programmes on socio-economic development. But a survey of some of the indicators of population and socio-economic development suggests that population programmes are only successful under certain conditions. These include general progress in modernity with a resultant decrease in mortality rates to a low of 10 or below per 1,000, increase in female literacy rate of over 50% and improved education and urbanization (Robinson, 1972).

The degree of success of population management programmes has been highly limited in areas that lack characters of modernity. In spite of knowledge of modern contraceptives in rural areas, actual usage could still remain very low. Even for Ghana as a whole, contraceptive usage for women aged 15-45 or their partners is as low as 16.5 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000).

Although the proportion of adult females who have ever been to school is about 60 percent, the female literacy rate is about 50 percent. It is interesting to note that the definition of the literacy rate is so generous that it includes all adults who can write at least one alphabet.

But the response of adults to population control programmes is positively correlated with the level of education. In view of this the 16.9 percent of adult Ghanaians with secondary or higher education is not enough for the enhancement of the success of population control programmes (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000).

Formal education has been observed by Chesnas (1992) to be the major instrument of change and thus its variation among people of different locations has implications for the success of population management programmes. Table 1 illustrates the regional variations in formal education among adults in Ghana.

Table 1: Proportion of adults who have been to school by Region

Region	%
Western	75.2
Central	67.1
Greater Accra	85.6
Volta	70.2
Eastern	74.9
Ashanti	80.0
Brong Ahafo	72.3
Northern	34.5
Upper West	44.5
Upper East	26.3
Ghana	68.8

Source: Ghana Living Standards Survey, Report of the (Fourth Round GLSS4), Ghana Statistical Service, October 2000.

These variations suggest that the success of population management programmes is likely to vary considerably across the regions since formal education influences the success of population control programmes. Such variations can be analyzed by examining the total fertility rates of the 10 regions of Ghana. Table 2 presents total fertility rates for the 10 administrative regions of Ghana in 1979/80 and 2000.

Table 2: Reported Total Fertility Rates by Region, 1979/80 and 2000

Region	1979/80	2000	% Decline (1979-2000)
Western	7.08	4.42	37.6
Central	7.27	4.01	44.8
Greater Accra	5.10	2.53	50.4
Volta	6.58	3.51	46.7
Eastern	6.62	3.72	43.8
Ashanti	6.24	4.84	22.4
Brong Ahafo	6.74	4.24	37.1
Northern	7.78	4.87	37.4
Upper East	5.81	4.19	27.9
Upper West	6.47	4.90	15.7
Ghana	6.47	3.99	38.3

Source: Ghana Population Data Analysis Report, Vol.1, Socio-Economic and Demographic Trends, Ghana Statistical Service, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

From the table, Greater Accra Region has the lowest total fertility rate while Upper West Region has the highest. But from Table 1, the Greater Accra Region has the highest adult literacy while Upper West has the third lowest. In general, there appears to be a strong correlation between adult literacy ratios and fertility rates among the 10 regions of Ghana. The Central, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions (which have adult literacy rates below the national average) also have total fertility rates above the national average.

From the Table 2, total fertility rate declined by 38.3% in Ghana between 1979/80 and 2000. Six out of the 10 regions experienced a decline in fertility rates below the national average four of which (the six regions) are those with the lowest adult literacy ratios. However, the Ashanti Region stands out as the region with the second highest adult literacy ratio but at the same time the second lowest in terms of the decline in fertility rate. In any case, this exception is not significant enough to invalidate the assertion that higher adult literacy can influence fertility downwards.

Furthermore, the following (Table 3) presents the proportion of the population who are dependant according to urban and rural locations.

Table 3: Proportion of population (%) who are children or Aged

Age Group	Accra	Other Urban	Rural
0-14	35.1	40.7	45.5
60+	5.3	7.2	7.6
Total	**40.4**	**47.9**	**53.1**

Source: Calculated from data in the GLSS 4.

As depicted in Table 3 there is a significant difference between the urban and rural areas for the proportion of population who are children. This does not suggest that fewer resources are invested in the population management programmes of the rural areas. Rather, it could imply that rural areas are less responsive to population control programmes. Another important element necessary for the success of population control is the level of poverty. According to Oduro (2004), rural poverty is estimated to contribute about 90% to national poverty. While 18.3% of urban dwellers own none of a certain range of consumer goods (radio, bicycle, car/truck, etc.), 27.1% of rural dwellers own none (Ghana Statistical Service, 2003). Amanor et al. (1993) observes that there are considerable disparities in Ghana with the north much less developed than the south.

Table 4 illustrates the poverty incidence of the poorest district in each of the 10 regions of Ghana.

Table 4: Poverty incidence (%) for the poorest district ins each Region

Region	District	Rural	Urban	Total
Greater Accra	Dangbe East	61	23	54
Western	Nzema East	55	18	45
Ashanti	Ahafo Ano South	65	50	64
Brong Ahafo	Sene	89	24	83
Volta	North Tongu	67	48	64
Eastern -	Afram Plains	87	22	84
Central	Agona	51	77	68
Northern	Gushegu-Karaga	92	95	92
Upper West	Nadowli	96	0	96
Upper East	Bawku-East & Bongo	99	0	99

Source: Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) II (2006-2009) November 2005, NDPC, Republic of Ghana.

From the Table 4 above, apart from Agona and Gushegu-Karaga Districts in the Central and Northern Regions, respectively, rural poverty is higher than urban poverty in the rest of the districts. The variance between rural and urban poverty incidence is highest (65 percentage points) in the Sene District in Brong Ahafo and Afram Plains in Eastern Region.

Between Northern and Southern Ghana, the disparity is also quite glaring. The poorest of the poorest districts among the first seven (southern Regions) is Afram Plains with an incidence of 84 percent which is 8 percentage points lower than the richest of the poorest districts in Northern Ghana (Gushegu-Karaga) with 92 percent. Comparing the incidence of poverty in Afram Plains against Bawku East or Bongo, the poorest districts in Ghana, the variance is as high as 15 percentage points. The disparity in urban and rural poverty is matched by reported fertility rates of 3.00 and 4.92, respectively for urban and rural localities in 2000 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005). In general, the poorer regions have higher fertility rates than the richer regions.

The evidence also suggests that it requires more than basic education to respond significantly to population control programmes. Unfortunately, the past two decades in Ghana witnessed a development policy that de-emphasized higher education. Subsidies on higher education may reduce fertility rates faster than subsidies on contraceptives for uninformed literates who may not be willing to use the contraceptives. It requires more than reading and writing alphabets and numbers to respond to population control programmes because such response is a function of attitudes and perceptions.

The results of a focus group discussion among women who had knowledge of modern contraceptives at Kparigu in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region in 2005 also appear to support the view that high incidence of poverty (which is almost synonymous with 'rurality' and illiteracy) retards the success of population control programmes. About 85 percent of the group observed that it is the wealthy people in the village who can use modern contraceptives comfortably.

The reasons assigned were that in spite of the token fees they pay for the services, their incomes are highly irregular. Therefore, it is not uncommon to realize that at the crucial time one has to go for the service, "there is not even a coin within the household." The women also argued that poor parents need more children than rich parents so that the children can support them in old age.

But the most dramatic revelation was the fact that women who used modern contraceptives before migrating to the cities of southern Ghana, for head porterage, popularly known as Kayayoo, were not trusted by their husbands. The mistrust, they explained, was due to the fact that the husbands suspected the women could have indulged in acts of infidelity in the cities but covered by the power of modern contraceptives. Therefore, these women in spite of their knowledge and use of modern contraceptives in the past refrained from using them on their return in order not to displease their husbands. Prospective migrant women could also refrain in order to avoid such suspicions. Contrary to the expectation that such exposures could enhance the use of contraceptives, it rather retarded the usage.

Further more, some of the women observed that their migration encouraged their husbands to look for more wives and increase the household size. Therefore, poverty could trigger migration of the women which in turn would increase household size as the men find it difficult to cope with the absence of their wives.

These findings suggest that real development issues may be more potent in reducing population growth than direct population management measures under some circumstances. Hence, allocating more budgetary support for agricultural productivity and malaria control programmes for instance, may impact more on population growth than subsidizing contraceptives. For instance, Ghana spent only 2.5 percent of its total budget on agriculture in the early 1990s and 2000s as compared to over 10 percent for some developing countries in Asia (World Bank, 2005).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Ghana's population policy since 1969 recognizes a two-way interrelationship between population and development and therefore integrates population management into socio-economic development programmes, it is doubtful whether a significant progress can be made with population management in the context of the levels of poverty, illiteracy and general deprivation that characterize the rural areas of Ghana in general and Northern Ghana in particular. The evidence in poorer (rural)

localities vis-à-vis urban localities suggests a wide disparity in fertility rates. Between northern and southern Ghana, the evidence is also glaring. In spite of prioritizing population management and integrating it into development programmes, progress in poor localities could be too slow for development.

It is possible that the cost of population management outweighs the benefits in the rural areas with extreme poverty. A careful evaluation of costs and benefits of population control programmes in rural areas could thus be useful for guiding policy.

It is therefore necessary to rethink the policy on population management vis-a-vis initiatives for direct development. Where the level of modernization and development is too low (as prevailing in most rural areas in Ghana) it may be more useful to substitute direct development initiatives such as improving agriculture, health, education and physical infrastructure for population management programmes. With such an approach, the nation might eventually be killing two birds with one stone. While acknowledging the fact that population management cannot be ignored in development policy, it would be useful if localities with varying features are considered on their own merits. Population control programmes should be de-emphasized now in the extremely poor and deprived localities to make room for more investment in initiatives for direct socio-economic development.

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