

POPULATION EXPLOSION IN NIGERIA: CAUSES, ITS EFFECTS ON EDUCATIONAL SECTOR AND THE WAYS FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

This paper treated the causes of population explosion and its effects on educational sector in Nigeria. Various past studies by researchers and personal experiences of the author as a Nigerian were critically examined. Causes of population explosion and its effects on educational sector were fully discussed. The paper went further to propose the various measures to be put in place to control the incoming birth rate by the Federal Government and Nigerians themselves. Among the proposed measures to control population explosion were executive and legislation policies, sex education and among others. The paper concluded that since the Federal Government is desirous to eliminate poverty, hunger, illiteracy, diseases and to provide effective food, healthcare and education to our future generations, then, the government should take the drastic steps to implement the stated measures.

Keywords: Birth rate, Causes, Educational Sector, Effects, Population Explosion, Solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Hornby (2010) defined population as the total number of people who live in a particular area, city or country. The population of people in a country is very unique to the development of that country. A country cannot manage itself without the human resources of the country. Of course, the human resources are obtained from the total population of it. Without the population of people in a country, technological advancement cannot be emerged. Although, the population of people in a country is a natural phenomenon. To the Christians, the Bible has told us that go to the world and multiply. In other words, the population of people is ordained by God Almighty. But the same God Almighty didnot directed men and women to give birth to children they cannot cater for. Meanwhile, population explosion is the continuous or rapid increase in the total number of people living in a particular area, city or country without corresponding increase in the available resources that will sustained the people. Presently, Nigeria is faced with the population explosion of people in all parts of the country. This high population growth in Nigeria has over stressed all sectors of the economy with high cost of living. According to Fan and Besong (2010), the factors that were responsible to the population explosion in Nigeria were high birth rate, low death rate and immigration. Fan and Besong (2010) further stated that population competes directly for the finite resources that would have been used to generate income. The two authors maintained that the consequences of this high increase in the population were that children will be chronically malnourished and there will be high level of unemployment, hence, low level of income per capital.

Nigeria is a country where some married couples and unmarried couples gave birth to children they cannot cater for. The number of children per couple is not controlled by the government of the day. With the Corona Virus disease, popularly called Covid-19, it becomes very cleared to all Nigerians that, indeed, there is population explosion in Nigeria.

At the moment, the level of poverty in Nigeria is not encouraging. One of the factors that is responsible for the abnormal level of poverty in Nigeria is the imbalance between the available

resources and the population of the people. For instance, as at the time of writing this article, the prices of goods in the market have been on the increase on a daily basis. In Economics as a subject in the secondary school level, when demand is in excess over supply, prices of goods will definitely increase. Moreover, the writer of this article strongly believed that population explosion of people is one of the factors responsible for the abnormal increase in the prices of goods in the market. Holistically, many Nigerians are not even aware that, indeed, Nigeria is overpopulated. Let us look at the area of employment of Nigerians into various positions in the different ministries at the Federal and State levels, the huge number of applicants that will apply for such vacancies is very amazing. For instance, if the Federal Government declared 10,000 positions to be fill in the different ministries and agencies, over 100,000 applicants will apply for 10,000 positions. Nigeria as the giant of Africa has the needed human and material resources to regulate its population. Meanwhile, various policies put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria, if at all such policies exist, to check excessive population of Nigerians are not working. Although, many studies on population explosion in Nigeria have been conducted by researchers, but majority of such studies were not linked to the educational sector. Therefore, this paper will examine the causes of population explosion in Nigeria and its effects on the educational sector, and also, the ways forward.

Causes of Population Explosion in Nigeria

The causes of population explosion in Nigeria are numerous. This paper will try as much as possible to highlight and discuss the various causes of population explosion in our dear country. Below are the various causes of rapid growth of population in Nigeria.

1. **Lack of birth control law put in place by the Governments:** Federal, State and Local Governments have failed in this regard as highlighted above. Nigeria is a country where married and unmarried couples gave birth to children the ways they want. Nigeria is a nation with high number of orphanage homes. Normally, orphanage home is a home for children whose parents are dead (Hornby, 2010). But in Nigeria, there are orphanage homes where children whose parents are alive. This is a sign of population explosion. According to Campbell (2018) quoted the former Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Eze Duruiheoma and said that Nigerians knew that they were by far the most populous country in Africa, and they were proud of it. According to the author, by the year 2050, the author predicted that Nigeria's population will displace the population of the United States as the third most populated country in the world after China and India. The former Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC) as revealed by Campbell (2018) also noted that Nigeria has no population policy that would limit births, and the people of Nigeria have traditionally valued large families. However, because of the lack of birth control law put in place by the Federal, State and Local Governments, the population of human beings has outgrowth available resources in Nigeria. It is a very serious challenge to the country's development.
2. **Lack of family planning:** Since the Federal, State and Local Governments failed in their responsibilities to regulate the number of children per couple, each couple on his part equally failed in his responsibility to adopt appropriate family planning. According to Umana (2019), most couples failed to use contraceptives in the control of birth. Umana (2019) further added that inability to use contraceptive is a common practice among couples in the Northern part of Nigeria.
3. **Early marriages:** Couples married at the early ages had a very serious implication on the population growth. Such couples are not matured enough to control the number of children both

of them will give birth to. A man and a woman coming together and married is a very serious issue that it should not be taking for granted. In Nigeria, we had cases of couples who got married, few years later, they are not together again, leaving the children to take care of themselves. We equally had cases where new born babies were dumped by couples in the nearby refuge or abandoned houses. This is an indication that such couples are not ready for marriage. Furthermore, Nigeria as a country has experienced this kind of situation, hence, rapid population growth was the result.

4. **Male child preference syndrome:** In Nigeria, male children were more highly valued than female children (Oramah, 2006). According to Oramah (2006), the reasons for such habit were of carrying on the family name by the male children, greater upper-body strength for physical labour, and among others. Unfortunately, such habit, in most cases, leads to the common practice of continuous child birth in an attempt to have male offsprings. Also, in most cases, couples without male child or children will be receiving pressures from the husband's family against the man and his wife. In an attempt to satisfy his family's demand, the man will go ahead and marry another woman. The process may likely continue until at least a male child will be giving birth to. According to Osam (2019) quoted Nnadi (2013) and Ogege (2011), reported that the society placed more value on male children than females because of properties and other traditional benefits attached to the male children.
5. **Religion beliefs:** There are three major religions in Nigeria, namely, Christianity, Islam and Local tradition. In Islam, men were allowed to marry more than one wife and also the same to the Local traditional religion. According to Oramah (2006), Islamic religion encourages large families and early marriages that associated with polygamous family system. In addition, Osam (2019) reported that such men were polygamist in nature and they believed that they have the capacity to sustain such large families without taking into consideration that they are contributing to the population explosion in Nigeria.
6. **High rate of illiteracy among Nigerians:** Illiteracy is a disease that in most cases is not noticeable by the person concerned. The person concerned felt that what she or he is doing is right, but in the actual sense, is not right. This is the exact behaviour of some of the men who are polygamist in nature. The illiteracy as used in this paper means those people that lack the knowledge of population and sex educations.
7. **High sexual urges among some men and women:** Although, normal men and women have sexual urges. But in a case where the sexual urges of both parties are too high, it becomes a very serious problem to the society. A man with high sexual urge cannot be effectively remained with one wife. Such man will ended up marrying many wives with large number of children. Also, there were some large number of women with high sexual urges, such women will equally ended up having children with different men that they cannot cater for.
8. **Old-agesocial security:** In Nigeria, several cultures believed that children were the only form of support for their parents during old age (Oramah, 2006). Because of this mind- set among some families, most men were ended up having many children. With these many children, some men and women felt that one or more among the children will be able to take care of them when they might have reached the old age. Some parents also believed that, in case when they eventually died, the success of their burial ceremonies will depend on the large numbers of their children. In most cases, the reverse is the case. In view of this, Osam (2019) reported that the result of the existence of Almajari or street beggars had caused social problems such as poverty,

illiteracy and violent crimes in the Northern part of Nigeria. All these are the products of having too many children by couples without proper management of such children.

9. **Perceived high infant mortality:** This perceived high infant mortality mind-set is very common among some couples. With this mind-set, some men and women are ended up in having too many children they cannot control and manage. Oramah (2006) discovered that some people perceived the need to have many babies with the view that some will survive and some will die. Oramah (2006) further stated that the survived children will help their parents in the farm, support them when they were already old and so forth. This kind of mentality thinking has gone so deep in the minds of so many Nigerians. Today, Federal Government cannot even tell Nigerians the exact population figures.
10. **Immigration:** According to Renewable Resources Coalition (2016), the unchecked immigration into countries will lead to overpopulation to the point where those countries no longer have the needed resources to sustain such population. Nigeria as a country falls under the categories of such countries. Today, we have the issue of Boko Haram in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of the members of the Boko Haram are not Nigerians.
11. **Better medical facilities:** Victor (2018) sees better medical facilities provided by the governments as one of the causes of population explosion. Victor (2018) stressed that illnesses that had claimed thousands of lives in the past and now were cured as a result of the intervention of vaccines developed by medical scientists. According to Victor (2018), people now live longer because of better medical facilities available to them in Nigeria. Technically, this has contributed to the rapid population growth in Nigeria.

Effects of Population Explosion on Educational Sector in Nigeria

Population explosion has effects on the various sectors of the economy but this paper attempted the effects of its on educational sector. Population explosion leads to:

1. **Overstretched of educational facilities:** Educational facilities as used in this paper mean human and material facilities. At the primary and secondary schools levels of education, educational facilities available at these levels of education have been overstretched by the huge number of students that want to acquire basic education especially for schools located in the urban areas. At the university and polytechnic levels of education, the situation is not different. At the various universities in Nigeria, we have cases where a lecture hall that was meant for 100 students will be crowded with more than 200 students with some students outside the lecture hall receiving lecture.
2. **Mass production of poor quality graduates:** As a result of overstretched of educational facilities by the huge number of students, there is tendency that poor quality graduates will be produced by the various educational institutions, especially those schools owned by the governments. Nigeria as a country is not exempted from this fact. For instance, normally, an overstretched lecturer cannot give his/her best to the students. According to Mfono (2008), one of the immediate outcomes of rapid population growth was the explosive growth of the school age population. Mfono (2008) further stated that such population growth often militated against the improvement of the quality of education. Because of this population explosion in Nigeria, the country now limited itself in producing quantity graduates instead of quality graduates. In supporting the above claim, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has raised an alarm on the issue, but the Federal Government did not worry himself on the issue raised. The

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) told the Federal Government to equip the various public Universities with human and material resources.

3. **High cost of acquiring tertiary education:** In an attempt to regulate the large number of applicants seeking admission into the various universities, some States Government have increased school fees to the extent that is beyond the scope of some students. This kind of development does not encourage economic development of any nation. In addition, the cost of university education owned by private individuals is on increase. Sometimes, some students were frustrated and think otherwise.
4. **Corruption in the educational sector:** Since the population of applicants seeking admission into the various public universities and polytechnics are far more than the available human and material facilities in these schools, some staff of the institutions have taken it upon themselves to be extorting huge amount of money from the prospective applicants. Some applicants were duped and failed to secure admission into the tertiary institutions. In fact, the level of corruption has gone so far in our various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Those that perpetrated such evil act in the tertiary institutions took the advantage of population explosion of prospective applicants.
5. **Ineffective teaching and learning:** A highly populated class cannot encourage effective teaching and learning. A highly populated class is a symptom of population explosion. Overcrowding of students in a class during teaching and learning can cause a lack of control and at the same time have a negative effect on the students (Alyssa, 2018). Alyssa (2018) further stated that students under this condition would be more prone to negative thoughts such as drug use, the creation of gangs and among others vices. In addition, Ochonogor and Umudhe (2007) reported that the high population of students in some classrooms made class management very cumbersome and by extension rendered teaching and learning ineffective.

Proposed Measures to Control Population Explosion in Nigeria

As at today, the population of Nigerians has been exploded. The already existed population explosion of people cannot be reduced unjustly except through natural death or unforeseen circumstances. However, this paper will proffer some measures that will be used to reduce the incoming births so that the available resources will be able to sustain the reduced population in the nearest future.

1. **Enactment of birth rate control law by the Federal Government:** The Federal Government as a matter of urgency should send a birth rate control bill to the National Assembly for consideration. In the proposed bill, the number of children per couple should be at most four (4) children irrespective of their gender. The same law is applicable to single parent (father only or mother only). If the proposed bill is eventually passed by the National Assembly and signed into law, the Federal Government should ensure that its implementation is total. Also, in the bill, the appropriate sanctions for the offenders, at least a year jail sentence in the Correctional Centers, should be clearly stated.
2. **Establishment of central data base for all births and deaths:** The Federal Government through the National Population Commission (NPC) should set up an electronic central data base for all incoming births and deaths. The various National Population Commission (NPC) officers in the various localities will work in collaboration with families, traditional birth attendance and health centers to record births and deaths, and at the same time transmit such data to the central data base at the headquarter. This process will enable the Federal Government to know those that have violated the birth rate control law. Also, the issues of fake age declaration and other form of crimes will be drastically reduced in Nigeria.

3. **Sex education:** Sex education should be introduced into our various tertiary institutions as full flesh course. At the primary and secondary schools levels of education, sex education should be taught as a subject.
4. Federal, State and Local Governments should have robust monthly financial packages for the ageing people. The idea of old-age social security in the mind of some Nigerians will be technically corrected.
5. Effective family planning should be encouraged by couples.
6. Federal Government should set up an agency that will conduct all burial ceremonies in Nigeria. This proposed suggestion, if implemented, will equally takes care of old- age social security mentality among some Nigerians. Such agency will works in collaboration with various families and religious leaders, as well as the National Population Commission (NPC) for record purpose.

Conclusion

Since the Federal and State Governments are desirous to eliminate poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease and to provide food, healthcare and education to our future generations (Faryal, n.d), then, the governments should take drastic steps to implement the proposed measures to control future population explosion in Nigeria. Federal Government through the National Population Commission (NPC) does not even know the exact figures of population of Nigerians and non Nigerians. For instance, if the various telecommunication companies (Mtn, Glo, etc) and commercial banks know the exact figures of their customers on a daily basis, then, the Federal Government on the issue of exact population figures of Nigerians and non Nigerians should not be left out. We all know that economic and social reforms cannot be undertaken without knowing the exact statistics of population of the people .In my candid opinion, the Federal Government should overhaul the excessive population growth in Nigeria. Furthermore, the cultures and traditions of the people should not be allowed to control Federal Government, instead, the Federal Government should control the cultures and traditions of the people.In so doing, the cultures and traditions of the people will be placed in proper perspective to suit the current situation of the economy of Nigeria. The era where some Nigerians do certain things based on their cultures and traditions that were not in line with the current reality of the economy is over. Federal, State and Local Governments, and all Nigerians should wake up and structure their minds toward positive thinking to check further population growth in Nigeria

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