



Comparative Analysis of National Population Policy and Population Control in Nigeria

Baba Dare Abubakar
E-mail: babadare2010@yahoo.com
abubakaroni@gmail.com

Department of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper reviewed the viability of National population policy in controlling of population explosion in Nigeria. The paper delved into the concept of population explosion, factors responsible for high population growth rate and barriers to effective population control in Nigeria. It examined effects of population growth on health care delivery services in Nigeria. It also x-rayed in detail the activities of National Population Policy on population control in Nigeria, National Population Policy Objectives, strategies and challenges of implementing National population policy in Nigeria among others. The study concluded that National Population Policy is a laudable and multi-dimensional measures needed for effective control of population explosion in Nigeria. The reviewer suggested that government should sensitize people at all levels on the provision entrenched in the population policy. It was also recommended that government should use all methods available to secure full community supports and participation in the implementation of the policy programmes. Health workers should sensitize people on the need for child spacing to reduce the number of children for each couples.

Keywords: Comparative, Analysis, National Population, Policy, Population Control

Introduction

The pattern of population distribution and persisting problems emanating from it, necessitated initiation of effective control measures. In any population study, consideration and emphasis are usually placed on figures or number of a given set or cluster. The term population is often used to refer to the total number of variable belonging to a set or group of people in a given geographical location. It is more akin to a discourse on human beings, but not only confine to them. According to Hornsby (2000), population is the total number of people who live in a particular area, city or country. It embraces all the people and animals living in a specified area. It is usually expressed in terms of figures such as number of women of childbearing age, head of households, school pupils, teachers, livestock, pigs and so on.

National Bureau of Statistics (2019) stated that the term population refers to all the people that are in a given country or territory at a given period of time. Asuru (2016) posited that the term "population" means that the total number of people who live in a particular area, city or country. This simply connotes all the inhabitant found within a geographical location at a stated period of time.

The world population has been on steady increase since the beginning of 19 century till date. The rapidity of population growth has reached an alarming and exploitative level that calls for drastic measures to avert its devastating effects on the entire populace. Bangdiwala, Fonn, Okoye and Tollman (2010) stated that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of over 150 million people. Nigeria consists of diverse people from different cultural background and developmental problems. Stewart and Natalie (2000) noted that population increase has been gathering momentum all over the world. Health authorities warn that the continued trend towards large agglomeration of people poses many problems in sanitation, air pollution, housing, water supply and noise control.

The high rate of population growth has effects on daily life and endeavour. The exploitative tendencies of population growth in developing countries, most especially Nigeria are very high going by the limited resources at our disposal. Olemeforo and Obasi (2015) stressed that Nigeria with a population of over 150 million people is facing problems of food shortage, lack of employment opportunities, declining health conditions, inadequate infrastructure such as good water supply, good roads, good electricity supply and skyrocketing medical costs to mention but a few. Tade and Ademola (2002) observed that inspite of the absence of reliable and accurate recent data, Nigeria's population growth rate based on annual projection when compared with available national resources is high enough to give cause for alarm.



Factors Responsible for High Population Growth Rate

There are different school of thought on factors that determine high rate of population growth in Nigeria. One of the school of thought is referred to as earlier theories on population growth and development. In the past, the issue of population explosion was controversial and ambiguous. Today, the changing events were substantial evidence for taking position and conclusion that there is pervading population explosion all over the world. Fox (1992) posited that population explosion is evident in the crowded streets of many of the world's major cities. The stress created by population problems in such localities as Beijing, China, Mexico city, Jakarta, Indonesia, India, and other cities throughout the world, convinces most westerners of the seriousness of the problem(s).

The inconsistent and fast growth rate of world population has been confirmed to be a fall out of advancement in modern technology, improved health services, employment generation, provision of essential infrastructural facilities such as good road, adequate water supply, regular electricity supply to mention but few. Ashford (1995), Fox (1992) and Jack (2000) identified factors responsible for rapid increase in the population as follows:

- i. Improved communicable disease control measures;
- ii. The identification of some disease causing organisms and immunization of people against them due to development of vaccines to prevent the diseases;
- iii. Adequate and sufficient food production;
- iv. Longevity has increased in many parts of the world, especially in the developed nations with high technology;
- v. Improved environmental sanitation that prevent pollution and engender disease free society;
- vi. Advancement in curative medicine which has helped to reduce mortality rate, disease complication and prevent spread of diseases;
- vii. The quest by some people to have many children to help them in carrying out their businesses;
- viii. Improved infrastructural facilities and economic development that increase per capital income.

Modern theories of population growth stem from innovation and effective health care services. Recently, some study showed that population increases as result of reduction in maternal morbidity and mortality rate. The decrease in the diseases and death rates these age groups is an indication of improvement in the quality of health services in Nigeria. According to National Bureau of Statistic (2019) the factors that affect high population growth rate are as follows:

- Poor political will on the part of governments at different level;
- Lack of knowledge about family planning;
- Old age social-security
- Effective health care delivery services
- Biological factor is also responsible for high surge in population growth rate;
- There is also social factors that stemmed from the need to have more children, most especially the male child on children
- Immigration and emigration factors which tend to shift burden that emanate from side to the other side.
- Economic development and new technologies/innovation that improve standard of living;
- The culture, traditions and norms of a society;
- Male infant preference in Nigeria

Barriers to Effective Population Control

The rapid and exploitative nature of population growth have raised serious question on the need to identify and control all factors hindering effective control of the rapid growth rate. Fox (1992) and; Monday and Agnes (2007) conscientiously noted that it is not easy to effectively develop population control programme because of the barriers to their success. The researchers identified the following impediments to population control:

- In the olden days, the need to ensure social security for old age by having many children is one of the impediments to effective population control;
- The high rate of infants mortality often force some parents to have large family size. This usually lead to population explosion and hinder effective population control;
- Religious teachings and practices are barriers to effective population control, especially in countries where the Roman catholic and the Islamic religion are practiced. The Roman catholic and Islamic religious prohibit the use of birth control measures. These religion groups encourage the practice of giving birth to as many children as possible, not minding the implications of such practice of human and material development;

- There is difficulty in population control because government policies support population growth in many countries. These countries viewed population explosion as an overall part of their economic growth;
- The high level of illiteracy is another barrier to effective population control; it is often difficult to teach illiterate people to practice effective birth control measures, because the reproductive process must be explained;
- The norms and values of some communities forbid or prohibit the use or application of birth control method. All their activities support increase in population.

Population Growth and Health Care Delivery Services in Nigeria

Shofoyeke (2014) noted that Nigeria's population rose rapidly over time without improvement on the quality of life resources available for social services including education, health as well as economic growth and employment.

The persistent increase in population in Nigeria has given room for immediate concern going by its devastating effects on all phases of our development, most especially health development. Samuel, Fasuyi and Njoku (2002) observed that the population of most developing countries including Nigeria have been growing rapidly faster than the rate of growth of the resources required to maintain people.

The population growing rate in Nigeria is estimated at 2.55% (8.6million) annually. Monday and Agnes (2007) noted that Nigeria population increased by 20.8m between 1995-2000 before 2006 population census. This figure represents 4.16m per annum. The current Nigeria population is 201, 409.487 people. The growth rate in Nigeria as at 1st of August 2019 is 8.9 percent accounting for about 68.8m between 2006 – 2019. The high growing rate has serious implications on socio-economic, physical and psychological development of people in Nigeria. Samuel, Fasuyi and Njoku (2002) stated that population growth occurs when the rate of birth exceeds the rate at which people die. A decline in death rate, especially among infants and children, often resulted from improvement in health care and nutrition. Population growth rate according to Asuru (2016) can be either increase or decrease in the number of birth/immigration, or death/emigration of people within a defined geographical location.

The perpetual increasing rate of population has engendered needs for effective and result oriented population control. Kpedekpo and Arya (2000) noted that African population are growing very fast. The high population growth rates are in the order of 2.5 percent per annum. The study of African population growth rate and initiation of urgent measures to reduce the rate is important to ensure sustainable development.

As earlier stated, the present population growth rate in Nigeria is put at 4.2% annually. Okanlawon (2000) posited that poverty and poor health status of the people are consequences of too many people putting too much demands on otherwise finite resources. In a fast growing population, the rate of increase in food production and provision of social services do not commensurate with rapid rate of increasing population. hence, the existing state of people's health. Odelola (2005) reiterated that in many developing countries of the world today, there is scarcity of resources and insufficient food production which are often responsible for poor state of health of the huge population.

In view of the persisting increasing population situation in Nigeria, in which the resources and food supply needed by teeming population are limited, viable population control measure is inevitable. Tade and Ademola (2002) noted that there are certain limits to the resources, such as food needed to maintain the population at a comfortable level. There is enough evidence of rapid declines in the quality of human living conditions and the environment which are associated with rapid increase in human numbers. To this end, there have been clamour for prompt implementation of all encompassing population programmes and policies for sustainable development. Hence, the need for effective implementation of National Population Policy in Nigeria.

National Population Policy and Population Control in Nigeria

The need to control the large increasing population and judicious utilization of resources abound in Nigeria necessitated the formulation of National Population Policy in Nigeria. Abubakar (2007) stated that National Population Policy is a statement of intents or predetermined course of actions issued by government (National government) aimed at guiding and controlling all the problems resulting from population explosion. It is a measure taken to ensure an optimum level of living standard for the entire people living in different communities in Nigeria, which will go a long way to improve their health standard. Tade and Ademola (2002) stressed that the policy emphasizes four broad goals which are as follows:

- To improve the living standards and quality of life of the population
- To promote the health of the population particularly through the reduction of death and diseases among high risk mothers and children;



- To achieve lower population growth rates through the reduction of birth rates by voluntary fertility regulation;
- To achieve a more even distribution of population between urban and rural areas.

Nigeria has been adjudged by the people all over as the most population country in within the Africa continent. The fast and steady increasing population led to adoption of national population policy in 1988, as amended in 1999 and recently national population policy of 2004. The major provision(s) adopted to take care of high increasing population include provision of effective health services, educational services and social support services to teeming population. Federal Government of Nigeria (2015) clearly highlighted health and health related strategies for effective population control as follows:

- Adequate health care services with emphasis on reproductive and sexuality health (fertility regulation, safe motherhood, child health and survival, control of HIV/AIDS infections);
- Effective control of all environmental conductions to ensure and improve level of standard of living;
- Achieve education for all to ensure improvement in knowledge attitude and practice of people towards health living.
- Improve communication network for effective health services to ensure prolongation of life.
- Address population dynamism by taken care of the needs different interest groups such as nomads; the aged, physically challenged refugees and displaced persons and so on.
- Ensure improve adolescent health and wellness
- Address all the socio-cultural barriers and legal supports.
- Ensure improve upkeep of statistics or the population record(s)

Tiloka and Silvana (2017) emphatically stressed that most of the population policy initiated for effective control of rapid growth in population are titled towards fertility control interventions and, reduction of maternal and child mortality. In spite of the heavy campaign for fertility control and child spacing, the birth rate continue to increase at the expense of death rate.

The focused of health care services rendered to teeming and fast growing population is to some extent aimed at ensuring highest living standard through carrying out services or programme that promote health and assist in reducing population growth. Edward and Salome (2015) enunciated that population growth can be achieved in three ways which include raising of mortality, promotion of migration, low fertility rate.

National Population Policy Objectives

In the past, Nigeria like most other developing countries had taken the issue of rapid increasing population with levity. It was only concerned with achieving policy objective of accelerated economic growth instead of effective population control. Abubakar (2007) highlighted the fundamental objectives of National Population Policy as follows:

- Improving the standard of living of people through fertility regulation measures entrenched in it;
- Maintaining low population growth rate through voluntary birth control and child spacing counselling;
- Ensuring effective allocation of resources through balance distribution of people within rural and urban communities;
- Sensitizing people of the need to maintain moderate family sizes that will improve their standard of living;
- Focusing on creation of awareness on population matters to the young people through sex education, sexual right and relationship, childbearing regulation and family planning;
- Ensuring effective development at both rural and urban centre through control of population explosion;
- Fostering the achievement of goals of National Health policy.

The implementation of national health policy of pass and amended version in 1999 fail to achieve their desire aims and objectives which led to adoption of another one in 2004 tagged 2004 National Population Policy in Nigeria Shofoyeke (2014) highlighted the following as strategies for achieving aims and objectives of the 2004 National Population Policy in Nigeria:

- Achieve a reduction of the national population growth rate to 2 percent or bower by the year 2015
- Achieve a reduction in the total fertility rate of at least 0.6 children day five year.
- Increase the modern contraceptive prevalence rate by at 2 percentage point per year.
- Reduce the infant mortality rate to .35 per 1,000 live birth by 2015.
- Reduce the child mortality rate to 45 per 1,000 live birth by 2015.
- Reduce maternal mortality ratio to 125 per 1,000,000 live birth by 2010 and to 75 by 2015.
- Achieve sustainable universal basic education as soon as possible prior to the year 2015.



- Eliminate the gap between men and women in enrolment in secondary, tertiary, vocational and technical education and training by 2015.
- Eliminate illiteracy by 2010
- Achieve a 25 percent reduction in HIV adult prevalence every five year.

Strategies for Implementation of National Population Policy

A critical examination and analysis of above discussion definitely showed that the programmes designed for realization of National Population Policy objectives are numerous and multi-dimensional in nature. It is expedient to state that any attempt at implementing the policy should put many factors into consideration and employ different approaches for its effective implantation. Kuteyi (2015) highlighted the methods and strategies of implementing National Population Policy as follows:

- The adoption and implementation of the policy should be voluntary and in accordance with fundamental human rights of individuals;
- Family planning services will be made easily affordable, safe, accessible and culturally acceptable. Hence, all agencies both public and private employees in health industry should be judiciously utilized;
- Family planning should be formulated and implemented within our health care and health related systems;
- Appropriate measures shall be taken to support and protect the family which is the basic unit of our society.
- The programme shall aim at raising the age at first marriage to at least eighteen years to prevent early marriage and teenage pregnancy;
- Special attention shall be paid to educating and motivating the population at grassroots level on the health, social and demographic effect of family planning;
- Emphasis will also be placed on informational programmes for the male population on the social and economic implications of excessive childbearing and large family size;
- Consideration will be given to integration of budget to the achievement of above stated programmes;
- Provision of primary health care services for achievement of goals of health for all by the year 2000 and beyond.

Shortcomings and Challenges of Implementing National Population Policy in Nigeria

As laudable, focused and directional the policy appears to be, it lack necessary tools for realization of the stated objectives. This is to say that the policy lack some essential tools to achieve its stated objectives. Kuteyi (2015), Tade and Ademola (2002) identified some of the shortcomings and challenges of National Population Policy as follows:

- Lack of adequate statistical data on which to base the implementation of laudable programmes for actualizing policy objectives;
- There is high rate of illiteracy which makes the implementation of some of policy programmes difficult;
- There is problem of inadequate population experts and managers, which often retarding planning and implementation of population control programmes;
- There is inadequate funds to prosecute all the designed population control programmes;
- Even though the policy's underlying principle of regulating the country's population was generally accepted, most commentators and experts have roundly condemned certain aspects in the policy. These include the four-children per-woman principle, and its relatively narrow focus on family planning objectives;
- The policy lacks legal teeth to bite and this make its implementation difficult if not impossible.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The National Population Policy consists of a laudable, all encompassing and multi-dimensional measures which have been poorly managed or implemented. The inherent lack of political will, inadequate manpower, inadequate health facilities and insufficient funds for implementing programmes are factors adduced for dismal programme implementation. This work therefore suggests the following factors as measures for effective implementation of National Population Policy statement for viable population control:

- Government at all levels should try as much as possible to employ population experts and managers to ensure effective implementation of population control programmes;
- Health workers should sensitize people o the need for child spacing to reduce the number of children for each couple;



- Governments at various levels should earmark reasonable funds for programme implementation;
- All machineries should be put in place by government to ensure that there is adequate statistical data for effective planning and implementation of policy programmes;
- Religion leaders and community associations should be sensitized to give support to full implementation of the population policy;
- Government should sensitize people at all levels on the provisions entrenched in the population policy;
- Health workers should try as much as possible to health educate people on the implications of early marriage;
- There should be much emphasis on both population education and family planning education to secure supports for the implementation of the policy programmes and
- Government should use all methods available to secure full community supports and participation in the implementation of the policy programmes.

References

- Abubakar, B.D. (2007). *The administration of community health care services in Nigeria*. Ilorin: Tanimola-Publishing Limited
- Ashford, L.S. (1995). New perspectives on population. Lessons from Cairo; *Population Bulletin*, 50 (1), 1-44
- Asuru, C. (2016). Population growth and development: An overview. *International Journal of Economics and Business Management* Vol. 2, 2, 38-52 retrieved on July 2019 from www.ijardpub.org.
- Bangdiwala, S.I.; Fonn, S.; Okoye, O. and Tollman, S. (2010). Work force for health in developing countries. *Public health reviews*, 32, 1, 296-318
- Edward, A. K. & Salome, N.N. (2015). Family planning and population control in developing countries: Ethical and socio-cultural dilemmas. *Online Journal of health ethics*, 11, 1, 6-12
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2015). *Nigeria's 2004 National Policy on population for sustainable development*. Nigeria: National population commission publication
- Fox, R.W. (1992). The population explosion; Threatening the third world's future. *Futurist*, 26(1), 60-64
- Hornby, A.S. (2000). *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English (Sixth Edition)*. Italy; Oxford University Press
- Jack, N. (2000). *The modern society*, London: George Allen and Unwin Limited
- Kpedekpo, G.M. and Arya, O.L. (2000). *Social and economic statistics for Africa*. London; George Allen and Unwin Publishing company
- Kuteyi, O.F. (2015). The National Population Policy. In Akinkugbe, O.O. and Salako L.A. (Ed) *Nigerians in the nineties*. Ibadan: Spectrum Book
- Monday, E.O. & Agnes, E.M. (2007). Counselling and population control in Nigeria; *Journal of Ecology*, 22, 2, 101-105
- Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2019). Population Growth; *Policies and development*
- Odelola, J.O. (2005). Population and family life-education for health; sustainable democracy and nation building; the Nigerian Experience. *West African Journal of Physical and Health Education*, 9(1), 101
- Okanlawon, F. A. (2000). Population issues; the situation in Africa. *Nigerian School Health Journal*, 12 (2), 36-64
- Olemeforo, N.C. & Obiasi, O.E. (2015). *Environmental: Nigeria in focus*; Owerri: Achugo Publication
- Samuel, P.S.; Fasuyi, O.O. and Njoku P.A. (2002). *A New tropic health science*; London; Macmillan Publishing Limited
- Shofoye, A.D. (2014). An appraisal of the 2004 National Policy on Population for sustainable development. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, 23, 2520-2529
- Stewart, M.B. and Natalie, A.B. (2000). *Personal and community health*, London: C.V. Mosby Publishing Company
- Tade, A.A. and Ademola, T.S. (Ed, 2002). *The challenge of sustainable development in Nigeria*; Ibadan: Nigerian Environmental study and action team
- Tiloka, D.S. & Silvana, T. (2017). Population control policies and fertility convergence: *Journal of Economic perspective* 31, 4, 205-228. Available on <http://eprints.Ise.ac.uk>