

## Nigeria's Population Explosion and Its Underdevelopment Imperatives

**Adedokun Jonathan Olusegun Ph.D**  
Federal University Oye-Ekiti  
Department of Public Administration  
Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria  
E-mail: olusegunadedokun2@gmail.com  
Tel: +2348033523021

**Gabrielfavour Eke Ph.D**  
Department of Political Science and Sociology  
Western Delta University  
Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria  
E-mail: ekegabrielfavour@gmail.com  
Tel: +2348056175436

### Abstract

This paper discussed the increasing danger of population explosion in Nigeria and its implication to available food supply and social infrastructures. The objective of the paper is to show that over population is the reason for high level of illiteracy, wide spread unemployment, poverty and violent crime. The study reveals that with the rate of population increase in Nigeria if nothing is done, time will come when it will result to environmental hazards, malnutrition and other infectious diseases. It observed that while other countries of the world like China and India with increasing rate of population like Nigeria are making serious efforts through Laws and legislation to combat this population increase. The Nigerian leaders are not putting any effort to fight this menace rather what is taking centre stage in Nigeria is this issue of corruption and embezzlement of government funds. The paper was of the opinion that this attitude of our leaders is what has resulted to unemployment armed robbery, kidnapping, underdevelopment and crises of killing and marginalization. It concluded by suggesting a way forward which includes reduction in early marriages which leads to increase in child bearing, corruption and poverty. Finally, it recommended that the government should encourage the people to do away with outdated customs and traditions which make it possible for people lay more emphasis on male children to the extent that unless they have male children, they will not be satisfied.

**Keywords:** Nigeria Population, Explosion, Underdevelopment.

### 1. Introduction

The rate of population increase in Nigeria since the end of the civil war in 1970 has become very alarming. Nigeria is now seen as the fastest growing country in the world with an estimated population of one hundred and seventy million people (170, 000000). It is seen to be the sixth largest in the world in relation to population (NPC 2015). The most ugly and dangerous aspect of this population phenomenon is that as the population of Nigeria continues to increase in this fastest rate, the level of underdevelopment continues to widen instead of decreasing. Most observers are of the opinion that if nothing drastic is done time will come when the population will grow to the extent that the Nigerian leaders will be very confused and will not know what to do about it.

As it stands now, Nigeria is the most populous country in the sub-Saharan Africa, and also the tenth most populous in the world after china and India NPC (2015). The danger of this is that while other countries of the world like China and India are making serious efforts to grapple with the rate of population in their own area, the Nigerian government is not doing any significant thing to handle this population increase rather what is taking most centre stage in Nigeria is the high rate of corruption and underdevelopment of the citizens and the country. This level of population explosion is more in the youth who are affected by both poverty and unemployment. The (UNDP 2007)

reported that the youth below the ages of 21 and above constitute (49%) fourth nine percent while their dependency rate is estimated at 89%. Most Nigerian states are presently experiencing one of the most crushing and widespread incidence of poverty in the world with close to 70% of her population living below the poverty line, with low level of industrial development and large number of unemployment. This notwithstanding, the value of live has deteriorated and social infrastructures are completely absent. (NDDC 2006). The reason why any reasonable nation must fight population increase is because of its direct consequence on food consumption and other serious consequences or outcome which includes malnutrition problems, lack of social institutions High level of illiteracy and widespread unemployment, ignorance and political apathy. The most harmful aspect of it is that the people will be frustrated because of hunger and will antagonize and molest anybody believed to be directly related or connected to the government which they believe is the cause of their suffering. This is the reason you noticed widespread Chaos, anarchy, violence crisis in countries with over population and high rate of underdevelopment. The Nigerian situation is worse in the sense that Nigeria with its abundant mineral and Natural resources especially high crude oil exports which account for 60 percent of its gross domestic product. Also Nigeria is the sixth world's largest producer of oil and the Nigerian oil is the second best in the world (Sodaro 2001). It is estimated that the Nigerian Government has taken more than 320 billion worth of crude oil since the ends of the 1970. Arolowo (2006), with all these, should the Nigerian state still be talking about poverty, hunger and underdevelopment. The Nigerian population is expected to increase to 200 billion 2019 due to high fertility rate Bureau for statistics 2015). Yet nothing, no serious effort is been made by the Government to handle this population increase. The population will continue to increase in those countries with high rate of fertility and unemployment. It will also increase the level of crime and criminality because available statistics have shown that population increase is mostly more in the area of youth and people below the age of 21 years who have no job and when the government of the day has not made any necessary provision for their future.

Most urban centers in Nigeria have started experiencing the effects of over population, some are now living under very dirty environment and the government has few resources to grapple with this and to conduct an adequate census population to know the real figure. In such towns like Lagos, Onitsha, Aba, Kano and Ibadan etc more than twenty people share one apartment and one bathroom and toilet, in fact the population has shifted from the rural to the urban areas. Those living in these areas each day continue to feel the impact of over population. People shifts to the town, because the enabling environment to survive in the villages are not there. No water, electricity and others. The major objectives of this paper is to state the effects of over population and its consequent impact on the economy leading to underdevelopment.

The paper is structured into the following, conceptual clarification, reasons for over population and its effects, underdevelopment theoretical framework of analysis, conclusion and the way forward.

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

The issue of population explosion has become a very serious problem in Nigeria, it has equally affected most urban centers in Nigeria with effect that these cities have become over populated and people are overcrowded in small apartment and the area constituting a problem in terms of environmental hazards, death problems and the spread of infectious diseases. Obueh (2015) sees population explosion to occur where there is a dramatic decline in death rates, dramatic rise in birth rates and a consequent sharp increase in the average life expectance. He also stated that a population is the total number of people in a given country. While Aluko (2011) agreed that the phenomenal growth of our towns and cities has given rise to conurbation and metropolitan increase. It has equally resulted into traffic congestion, slums, shady towns, waste management, housing, pollution, poverty etc. These has affected the availability of houses, and resulted to scarcity of houses and growing increase in slumps and environmental hazards and other health problems. Reacting to dangers of population explosion Emine (2011), was of the opinion that there is great fear of the adverse effect of this population increase on the economy of Nigeria While the NPC (2015) stated that population is said to have over increased when the rate of increase in population surpasses the rate of increase in per capital output that the poverty level threatens the economy.

Makama (2011) observed that over population can be an advantage but if it is not controlled and planned, it may become a problem to the economy of the nation.

The English Dictionary of the 18<sup>th</sup> century defined population explosion as a sudden large increase in the number of people in an area. It also sees population or over population as a situation where a large number of people live in an area while population is the total number of people living or concentrated in a particular area or city. Considering the negative consequence of population explosion Adonri (2003), outlined some other consequences of population explosion in the area of health and reproductive life circle particularly on women. He went on to state that population and health care are closely related in relation to the danger and risk in women pregnancies and delivery, and if nothing is done at this level to control and manage the risk involved by planning so as to prevent

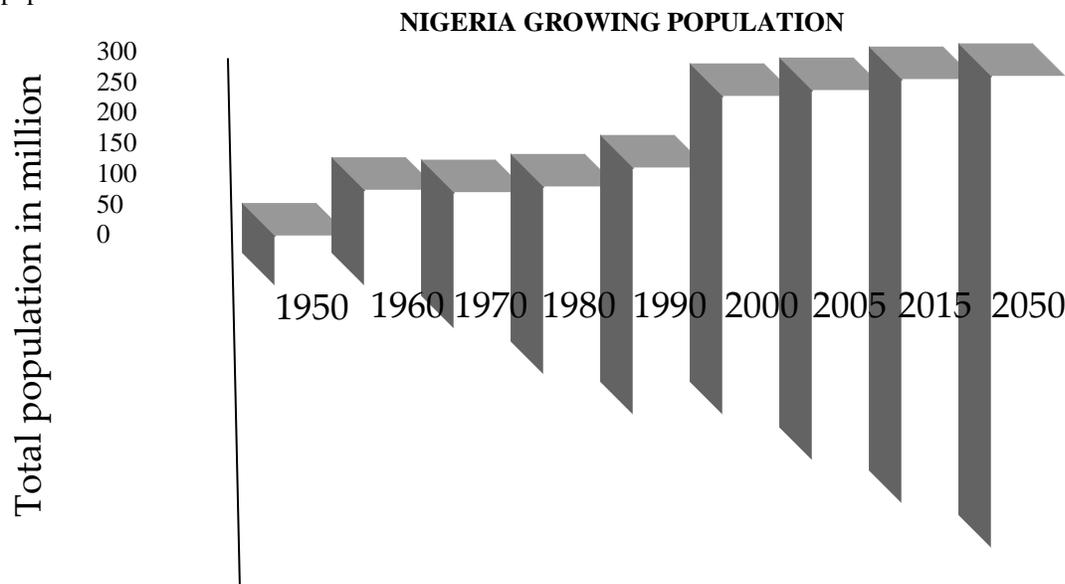
high level of pregnancies the impact will be too much. This has affected or resulted in the housing problems in most Nigerian cities, it has resulted into crisis situation manifesting itself in quantitative and qualitative form like rudimentary infrastructure, congestion, unhygienic condition, high densities and absence of organization as it is seen in most urban areas.

In Akhiojemi (2001), sees the effect of population explosion as enormous in the sense that it will affect the economy negatively both in the quality of Education and economic development, it will impasse on housing facilities, labour, training and health. The gap between the low and high income rate in terms of the quality of education will have adverse effect in the educational pursuit. Population reference Bureau PRB (1997), sees over population as the condition of having more, people than can live on the earth in content, happiness and health and still leave the world a fit place for future generation.

### 3. Reasons for over Population

It is not news to state that the rates of population increase in Nigeria in recent times have become very alarming and astonishing in comparison to the availability of resources at present. The (NPC 2015), stated that in the early sixties and after the independence of Nigeria the population was around 55 million and even with result of the first population census that was conducted in Nigeria immediately after independence, but now the estimated population of Nigeria is about 200 million. There are many reasons for all these increase.

The Number one reason for increases in population is the increase in Technology which has given rise to the reduction in death rate and has increased the number of birth. Some have agreed that the greatest threat of the future of humanity is the case of population explosion. The United Nation population fund (2000) was of the opinion that the total number of people in 1980 was 4.4 billion and the rate will get to 6 billion in the year 2000 and it is likely to reach 10 billion by the year 2025 and get to 14 billion by the end of the next century unless birth control drastically reduced. In some countries like China the birth rate has been fixed to one child pay family, but in Nigeria nothing is significantly being done. The birth control system is not working at all. Here you still see a family having up to seven to eight children not minding where the resources to take care of these numbers will come from. Most environmental scientist predict that the world's population will be between 10 and 20 billion within the next 50-100 years, while Nigeria with an average population growth rate of 2.56% and contributing 4% of the world yearly population.



The estimated total population of Nigeria in the year near future (globalise interactive world, May 2005).

The danger to this population explosion issue is that time will come when the resources available will not be able to cater for this massive increase and the ecosystem will be over heated or over used.

Another reason for this population explosion particularly in Nigeria is this traditional believes system. Before the independence and immediately after the civil war, it is believed traditionally that a man who has many children is a very rich man because those children will help him to cultivate the farm and this will lead to increased food crops or agricultural production. This is because by the year 1970 and before agriculture was the main stay of

Nigerian economy. This made most men to marry many wives and produced many children. Also by this time emphasis was not placed on western Education. But now, it has become necessary to send children to school and to reduce the illiteracy rate. The cause of things or living has been too high that families have beginning to find it difficult to cope with the cause of living.

Another factor is the emphasis placed on the value of male children the female will marry while the male children will continue the family lineage. This is the reason why many people who have not gotten male children continue to produce children until they are able to have the male child. In Africa and Nigeria in particular they believe is that if you have not gotten a male child it is assumed that you have not started, this is the reason for families having many children more than they can cope with.

Most people have come to believe that one of the greatest factors is the improvement in health facilities. People can now survive all kinds of ill health and diseases. The thousands of people who would have died now survive the attacks and all kinds sickness, comparing this to early times when only malaria alone was a very serious disease that can kill any time but now it no longer a threat, most of those dangerous diseases like cholera, HIV disease, malaria can now be handled and people living with these disease can still survive under serious medication unlike before now.

Poverty and unemployment, these two go together. There is no controversy or argument over the relationship between these two factors. When somebody is unemployed, that person is poor, as long as they stay at home without going to work, the tendency is for them to sleep and make love with their wives and husbands. Poor people see sex as the only source of enjoyment. Check all poor people around have the highest number of children, with the highest number of illiteracy. This is the reason why the illiteracy rate is very high among the poor and Jobless group. It is also at this level you see a high level of broken homes and single parent groups with high level of crime rate. "An idle mind they say is the devils workshop" if the government wants to control population increase and birth rate, attention should be directed on the jobless and poor people in the villages who have different mentality as concern child bearing.

Early marriages; this factor is also located around the jobless and poor people. Although some religions and traditions encourage early marriages not only that this increases the number children it also has negative effect on the health of the girl child that in given into early marriage when she had not yet known what marriage is all about. In most cultures, women marry earlier than men. Considering the age of their innocent girls who are given into early marriages they have nothing to contribute to the economy of the nation Chinweike (2011). Most of these young women who have no job to do and have no opportunity to go to schools turned themselves into commercial sex workers Obueh (2015). Some also decides to take greater risk to go to abroad for sex job, this also while doing this produce unwanted babies we have seen this from many of the girls repatriated from Libya and other African countries, came back with babies and pregnancies.

#### **4. Effect/Impact of Population Explosion in Nigeria**

From the time of industrial revolution to the independence of Nations, people have been afraid of the rising abnormal growth of population. The great Economist Malthus in (1803) looking at the rate population growth posed the question whether the rate of population increase will match with the availability of resources. This resulted in what he called the optimum population of a nation.

People like Adonri (2003) and Onwuka (2003) have also stressed the implication and effect of population explosion, they were afraid with the rate of women pregnancy rate in Nigeria with its resultant effects in the number of child's birth. They were of the opinion that if nothing is done, not only that it is going to have negative effect on demographic change, but the health implications will be very dangerous. They went on to advice that reducing the rate of pregnancy increase will equally creates impact on the quality of mothers and their child in Nigeria.

Some people in the past have made a case after increase population; however, the recent over burden on the Earth surface have contributed to the dysfunction of Earth surface which many have been talking about the protection of the Ozone layer. It has also affected the rate of fertility and birth rate.

In most of our urban centre today is overheated with population explosion some places like Lagos, Onitsha, and Ibadan etc. people live under bridges and slums, most of our health centers are more shadow of itself. Some specialist hospitals are now more consulting clinics this is as result of over population and large number of people to be attended to. In Nigeria today people live below 51 dollar per day. The condition of lives have become too critical for most homes that have many children to carter for, because of is difficult to take more than one square meal per day. In Most houses, 10-20 people share one toilets and one bathroom, the quality of food is very poor with low nutritional value and lack of balance diet. It has very serious negative effect in energy consumption, carbon emissions, air pollution and serious disease infections. Taking Lagos and Onitsha alone with the level of environmental degradation in Nigeria one can reason and estimate the level and the state of environmental condition

these towns will be in the next 15 years. As the number of people increase and double the space available remain the same and the available food resources remain stagnant, this will result to a lot of serious diseases and other dangerous factors which the government of the day will not be able to contain. For example the available geographical factor of Nigerian area remains limited to (923,768 square kilometer) and the current growth rate of population continues to increase on this fixed factor, this will result to a very serious negative factor.

Other negative factors as stated by Hughes (1997) that population explosion was responsible for about 54% of human environmental problems. They were of the opinion that population density contributes to deforestation which is responsible for environmental depletion. In recent times, people have attributed population increase to be responsible for endemic unemployment in Nigeria. According to (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004) the figure has risen to 17 percent perineum to 60 percent for the youth without jobs. Increase in population is one of the factors responsible for many road accidents in our roads, most vehicles carry overloads to accommodate many, the reason for this is because of pressure from home to meet up with the high demands for food at home. In less developed areas, particularly our village's population explosion will place a high demand upon the economy for social amenities. It will have negative effect on health and sanitation facilities which are in short supply. In our schools high rate of population increase will affect medical facilities and training of health personnel since most of these facilities are in short supply.

Some claim that high population always has some positive effects on the economy. This is not the case of the third world countries, there is no third world country in recent times that there high population has helped. Most of them are languishing in hunger and poverty with high rate of corruption. The increase in population which supposed to have helped them tap their mineral resources, have only ended up in explosion, the cities and most urban centers with large number of people living in one concentrated area looking for the Job that is not available. It is true that such high population could have helped them if not that their leaders are agents of the international capital who service their godfathers abroad, whom they make return to at the detriment of their citizens. They steal and embezzle government money and transfer it abroad for self-keeping. This is the reasons why there are no Jobs and it increases the level of unemployment.

## 5. Theoretical Framework of Analysis

In considering this work, demographic tradition theory will be more relevant in the analysis of this study. This theory provides a historical insight into the population problems of most developing countries of the world. It tries to explain why all developed countries in contemporary times have passed through three stages of population history. It postulates the following sequence of demographic patterns based on population changes which were generally observed in advanced countries.

Stage I: The pre-industrial or pre-transition phase. This stage had a very slow growing population as a result of high birth rates accompanied by high but slightly fluctuating death rates. This is the feature of the pre-industrial society that is before economic modernization. The second stage which is the transition stage, this had a rapid growing population or population explosion as a result of high birth rates and low death rates. This is what is noticed in the economy at the industrial take off stage. This occurs with presence of modernization with the improvement in the public and private health better diet and high income etc. Many of the third world countries are found in this stage of this population explosion phase. The last stage is the post transition stage. This is marked with declining in birth rate and low death rates.

The argument against this Demographic transition theory is that it is a fact and not a theory. The argument is that it is a fact which is relevant to the European experience and should not be applied to the African and the third world nations. The argument went on to state that high birth rate is not the only measure of fertility as a theory try to prove. While the different causes of population decline may be different in different countries

This theory was a follow up to reverend Thomas Malthus in 1798. At the time of this theory, population has become a problem in England which influenced this theory.

At that time there was a rapid increase in population while food supply was increasing at a very low rate, wages were equally very low while cost of living was very high, there was suffering especially with people with low increase rate because at this time population tended to outgrow the food supply. He argued that with population increased at a geometric progression example 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 etc, food production increased only at an arithmetical progression example 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 etc. He therefore thought that in future if nothing is done there will be shortage of food to feed the increasing population.

## 6. Conclusion

I have stated here that with the rate of population increase in Nigeria together with its resulted increase in underdevelopment and the level of youth unemployment in Nigeria, the least to say is that Nigeria as a Nation state

is seating on a tent peg waiting for explosion. The accompanying increase in chaos, anarchy. Youth restiveness, armed robbery, kidnapping and crisis of killing in Nigeria has become a sad story. There is no day you listen to the radio and television in Nigeria you will not hear one story of killing or armed robbery case particularly in the states like Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Edo and even states in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The reasons for all these are very clear over population with effect on absent of social infrastructure and issues of lack of development and marginalization. As long as the youth are rooming about without Jobs, that is increasing unemployment and they are hungry then the resultant effect would be crisis and armed robbery. This is the reason most of them hide under the guise of religion to commit crimes. As of now these is no serious law stopping anybody from having plenty children. Some family still produce up to ten and eleven children. The issue of control of population is not in the big book or part of the policy of the present government and the past ones. Most of our leaders are too corrupt that what could have led to the provision of infrastructure and developing the area have been stolen and take abroad, whether population is increasing or not is not there problem.

Having looked at the factors that lead to population explosion such as poverty, the truth is that most families that are poor see sex as the only source of enjoyment and this always lead, to more children. The issues of customs and tradition which is linked to belief system always encourage more children without looking at the necessary consequences or the after effects of it. The behavior of our leaders both present and the past not making any serious effort to handle the issue of over or increasing population rather they are only interested in looting the treasury for them own selfish purpose. The government should encourage people or families to embark on family planning and should issue out laws or policies to compel families to reduce the number of children to a very barest minimum. If no drastic thing is done, the rate the population is increasing now, Nigeria may head to a disaster and chaos as a result of unemployment hunger and underdevelopment.

## 7. Recommendation

All over the world today, particularly, China, India etc these government are doing much to control their population, so, the government of Nigeria should embark on electronic and other necessary medium to encourage and sensitize the citizens to do family planning.

Another necessary factor that can reduce over population is for the people do away with some of these outdated customs and traditions whereby if a man has not gotten a male child, he would not believe that he has children, this is a serious factor that lead to polygamy and many children. It is however recommended that early marriage should be discouraged.

The most dangerous factor that encourages over population is corruption. It is this that leads to underdevelopment. When the people have no job to do and are at home the only source of enjoying is sex which leads to pregnancies. The illiteracy level in Nigeria particularly in the North and in the Eastern part of the Country is very high, when they do not read and write and do not know how to control child birth they will continue to produce. Another one is the issue of early marriages particularly in the Northern part of the Country where young girls marry before they know anything this also encourages over population. Their culture also permits early marriages.

However, technological improvement, which has drastically reduced death rate has equally given room for over population. On this note, the whole blame is on the leader and government of the day, to reduce corruption and make both policies that will improve the living condition of the people and make better policies that will reduce over population.

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