

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF THE DECLINING SOCIO – ECONOMIC INDICES ON FAMILY SIZE: A CASE STUDY OF ZARIA ENVIRONS

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ESTHER YIMI BAGOBIRI (MRS)
Dept of Banking and Finance
Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic, Zaria

ABSTRACT

The study was designed to evaluate the impacts of the declining socio-economic indicators on family size in Nigeria. A target population of ninety married men and women of different background religion and age were selected through a systematic sampling technique. A structured questionnaire containing twenty items was used in collecting data. Simple percentage was the statistical tool used in the data analysis. Results of the study revealed that the low and middle class Nigerian have large family size of between five to eight children and above. The findings also revealed that poverty, ignorance, level of education or illiteracy are major factors influencing child birth and family size in Nigeria. Finally, the paper among other things recommends that poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and corruption be tackled with all sincerity and sense of purpose.

INTRODUCTION

Human being is a complex animal whose behavior is influenced by a lot of factors in his environments; people living in the same environment react in different ways to the same situation. Sociologists are often more concerned in finding out why people react in certain ways, they also try to look for those factors that influence human behavior in order to provide answer to human behaviour at different situation.

National Economic planners, Administrators and world leaders are also very much interested in their countries population growth and national planning; this is because of the realization of the relationship between national population and national development. (Heineken, 2006).

Developed nations of the world are known to have small population; the population of a country should be commensurate with the economic resources if living standard is to be enhanced. In this regards, Todaro (2006), adds that

If the population of a nation overweighed the economic resources, the outcome is poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, poor living conditions, poor health status and poor access to other social facilities.

The realization of this fact led to the adoption of family planning and birth control programmes by most nations of the world. African has the tradition of large families of many wives and several children who were the sources of labour on the farm. Apart from serving as sources of labour on the farm, many wives and several children were sources of pride for Africans. Traditionally, children are of great importance to couples throughout Africa because they are perceived by many as an affirmation of life, a sign of strength and as an economic necessity. (Ojo, 2007).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In February 1988 the Federal Government officially adopted family planning and birth control as a means of stabilizing the population for effective national and economic planning. This is because of the realization of the fact that if a country has to develop, the population must not out weigh her economic resources. At present, the declining socio-economic indicators are evidenced; illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, inflation, malnutrition, low per capital income, diseases, high exchange rate of the naira to the dollar, street begging, power failure, poor access to safe drinking water, poor housing and over crowded sleep, poor sanitation etc yet the population is on the

increase despite the adoption of family planning and birth control-programmes in Nigeria.

In 2006, Nigeria population was put at 140 million, if the population growth rate continues unchecked, the population will double in 24 years i.e. in the year 2030, and the population will be 280 million people. (William, 2007).

What it means is that there are other socio-economic factors that have impact on the size of each family and the population growth in Nigeria and these factors must be looked into if the growth rate and the population must be stabilized. What is the impact of the declining socio-economic indicators? Such as literacy, ignorance and poverty on birth rate and family size does the declining socio-economic indicator make Nigerian to reproduce more or cut down the size of their family? What are the other impacts of the declining socio-economic indications on the family? These are what this study is meant to find out.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to find out:-

1. The impacts of the declining socio-economic indicators on family size.
2. Find out if the socio-economic indicators especially level of literacy, ignorance and poverty makes couple to reduce or increase the number of their children.
3. To find out if couples increase children procreation as an economic source to cope with poverty.
4. To find out if the declining standard of living increases or decreases population growth in Nigeria.
5. To find out if inflation and economic depression have anything to do with extended family size or relationship.

HYPOTHESES

1. The declining socio-economic indicator has a significant effect on birth rate and family size in Nigeria.
2. The declining socio-economic indicators have negative impact on population control in Nigeria.
3. The declining socio-economic indicators widen the extended family relationship in Nigeria.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The control of national population is vital to national development because the provision of social services to the citizens is dependent on the nations resources and the population must not outweigh the economic resources if acceptable standard of living is to be maintained, thus this study is going to be useful to national population commission and public administrators who are mainly concerned with the welfare of the citizen. It is also going to be useful to the economic and national development planners who rely on population growth rate and population data in the process of national planning. No doubt this study will also be useful as academic reference.

RESEARCH TOOLS

The instruments used in conducting this study were questionnaire and oral interview. One hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed out to ensure uniformity and wide coverage but ninety were recovered. The questionnaires contain twenty (20) items that dealt with respondents' personal data and problems areas of this study. The instrument was face-validated by eight experts in the areas of Administration. In addition, many of them are involve in Administration curriculum development project. This study therefore, attempted to evaluate the impacts of the declining socio-economic indices on family size in Zaria environs.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A target population of ninety married men and women were obtained through a systematic sampling technique. People of different background, religion and age were given opportunity to be selected.

Four streets were selected in each of the five zones namely: Wusasa, Zaria City, Hanwa, Sabon-gari and Samaru in Zaria environs where studies were carried out. In each street, five respondents were chosen. In every fifth house of each street, one married person was either given a questionnaire to fill or interviewed. In all, twenty respondents were taken in each of the five zones to arrive at the samples size of one ninety (90) respondents.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analyses were based on ninety copies of the questionnaires that were correctly filled and returned. Simple statistical tools of frequency and percentage were used

THE RESULTS

The details of the results are presented as follows.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of educational background of the respondents and percentages

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
No formal Education	16	17.7
Primary School Certificate	38	42.0
SSCE/GCE	11	12.2
NCE/OND/Nursing	9	10
HND/University Degree	16	17.7
Total	90	100%

The table above shows that 17.7% of the respondents have no formal education, 42% are those with primary school certificate, 12.2% are holders of Senior Secondary school Certificate and General Certificate of education. 10% were holders of NCE/OND/Nursing and 17.7% are HND/University graduates.

Table 2: Frequency distribution and percentage of respondent occupation

OCCUPATION	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Senior Civil Servants	10	11.1
Junior Civil Servants	3	3.33
Artisan	18	20
Petty traders	16	17.8
Peasant Farmers	14	15.5
Un employed	13	14.4
House wives	16	17.7
Total	90	100%

Table 2 shows that 11.1% of the respondents are senior civil servants, 3.3% were junior civil servants, 20% were Artisan, and 17.8% are traders, 15.5% of the respondents are farmers, 14.4% are not doing any job and 17.7% of the respondents are housewives. Both the housewives and the unemployed are not gainfully employed in any job and they have to survive by certain means probably through child abuse such as sending their children on hawking. The probability of large family size is high among this group since they are using these children as a means of survival.

Table 3: Frequency distribution percentage and relationship between educational level and number of children.

Educational Level	Average no of Children	No of Respondent	Percentage
No former education	8 and above	48	53.3
Primary school certificate	7-8	27	24.3
SSCE/GCE	5-6	8	15.3
NCE/OND/Nursing	3-4	5	4.5
HND/University Degree	1-2	02	42
Total		90	100%

Table 3 shows the relationship between educational level and number of children of the respondents. The findings show that 48 (53.3%) of those with primary school certificate have between 7-8 children, 17 (15-

3%) of the respondents with SSCE/GCE have 5-6 children, only 5 (4.5%) of the respondents with NCE/OND/Nursing have 3-4 children while 4 (4.2%) of the respondents have HND/University degree respectively have 1-2 children. It probably means that the highly educated people have small family size because they are more conscious of standard of living and would want to maintain it in the face of the declining socio-economic indicators.

Table4: Opinion on whether the poor state of the economy makes Nigeria to reduce the number of their children.

	No of Responses	Percentage
Yes	42	46.67
No	47	52.22
No response	1	1.11
Total	90	100%

The table above shows that more than 50% of the respondents did not agree with the opinion that Nigeria generally cut down their birth rate or family size in response to the economic depression. However 42(46.6%) of the respondents belief that Nigerians are reducing their birth rate. These respondents might be that upper class Nigerian who is practicing birth control and they probably use themselves to judge others who do not even belief in the birth control or the use of it.

Table 5: Opinion on why some poor individuals reproduce in large number even though they are poor

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Opinion	38	42.22
For social prestige	13	14.45
For economic gains	35	38.89
Search for male or female child	4	4.44
Just for the fun of it	Nil	
Total	90	100%

Table5: shows the reasons why poor people have large family size of many children, 38 or (42.2%) of the respondents attributed it to ignorance, 35 or (38.8%) said it is for economic gains, 4 or (4.44%) said many couples give birth to many children in the process of searching for a particular gender (sex) i.e. male or female child. 13 or (14.4%) attributed it to social prestige.

Table 6: Opinion on whether certain Nigerian increases child birth as a compensation for poverty.

Opinion	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	52	57.78
No	31	34.44
No Response	7	7.78
Total	90	100%

The table above shows that 52 (57.7%) of the total respondents agreed with the opinion that certain Nigerians increase child birth as a compensation for poverty while 31(34.44%) did not agree with the opinion. 7(7.78%) respondents did not say anything about the item

Table 7: Opinion on impact of the declining state of the economy and social infrastructures on the extended family relationship.

Opinion	No of respondent	Percentage
People avoiding their extended families	34	37.78
Many people neglected their responsibility towards their extended family relation	33	36.67
Many unemployed and poor people rely heavily on their rich relations	11	12.22
It has strained some family relation	12	13.33
Total	90	100%

The result presented in table 7 shows that the impacts of the depressed economy in the country on extended family relationship. 34 (37.7%) of the respondents said that the hard economy made some people to run away from their extended family. Many people are found to have neglected their responsibilities towards their extended family as opined by 33(36.6%) of the respondents, while 12(33.3%) believed that the hard economy which made members of the same family to neglect themselves has also strained many extended family relationship. One can say here also that the declining socio-economic indicator such as inflation and general economic down turn have narrowed down the extended family relationship as against what it used to be in the past when things were good.

DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at evaluating the impact of the declining socio-economic indices on family size in Zaria environs. To achieve the objective of the study, respondents were drawn from the five zones in Zaria environs namely; Wusasa, Zaria city, Kongo, GRA and Samaru.

Hypothesis 1 Focused on the declining socio-economic indicator as it affects the birth rate and family size in Nigeria. The result showed that a greater percentage of low and middle class Nigerians have large family size of between 5-8 children in response to the depressed economy, as more than 50% of those in this socio-economic class engage their children in one form of economic ventures or the other. It was also found that poverty ignorance and illiteracy played a major factor in the attitude of this group towards child bearing because most of them appear not to be aware or conscious of a particular or acceptable living standard.

The results from testing hypothesis 2 shows that the declining socio-economic

indicators such as poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, make population control impossible as these factors increase birth rate in Nigeria. Certain groups of Nigerian reproduce ignorantly without any plan or provision for the care of the children; this is worsening as poverty and illiteracy are added.

The results from testing hypothesis 3 revealed that the economic depression and inflation has strained most extended family relation. It was discovered in the study that the economic down turn and hardship made Nigerian to stick to their nucleus family thus neglecting their responsibilities towards their extended family contrary to African culture in which we are our brother's keepers. With the above findings, the three hypotheses for this study are all accepted.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of data and interpretation of results of the study. The declining socio-economic indicator is directly connected with the birth rate and family size in Nigeria. The declining socio-economic indicators were also found to have negative impact on the population control and widen the extended family relationship in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings emanating from this study

1. Poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are the basic problems which gave birth to other problems in Nigeria. It is therefore very important for the government to tackle these basic problems with all sincerity and sense of purpose.
2. Poverty should be dealt with through the formulation of a workable and broad

base national plan where the interest of the masses is taking care of. Because with sincere national planning that takes care of the economy at the grass root, everybody will be employed and poverty will be a thing of the past in Nigeria.

3. Corruption should be dealt with sincerely in Nigeria because it is the basic problem towards the effective implementation of good national plan meant to turn Nigeria economy towards a positive direction.
4. Illiteracy and ignorance are diseases on their own. Education should be made free and compulsory for all Nigerians at all levels, this is because education provides the necessary knowledge that influences individual way of reasoning and behaviour towards generally accepted norms of the society. It also makes an individual to set a standard of living for himself and pursue it.
5. Government should set up a machinery through which public will be well informed on the need to cut down family size or the number of individual children to between 3-4 per couple as in China and India. It is not too much if the government can enact legislation to this effect in order to control Nigeria's population.

6. The danger of population explosion in a dwindling economic resource cannot be over emphasized especially in a country like Nigeria where petroleum is presently the only major foreign exchange earning where two thousand applicants are already chasing one hundred vacancies and 80% of the population are living below poverty line.

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