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IMPACT OF POPULATION PRESSURE ON HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examines population pressure on Nigeria and implications for productivity. It explains that though Nigeria is the most populous black nation in Africa and the world, the quality of population is weak in terms of aggregate for productivity. That the population is weak because of the level of poverty, poor health care policies, poor education, unemployment and underemployment, lack of safe drinking water and the prevailing preventable diseases. The paper calls on the government and well-to-do individuals to address the issue of poor health. Nigeria needs a healthy population to be able to contribute to her development and the world at large. Without a productive population Nigeria may not be able to integrate positively in the world driven by globalization. Nigeria is not overpopulated. The paper uses historical analysis as methodology.

Introduction

Population is an important factor in national development. It also determines the kind of market in the country depending on the productivity or viability of such a population. The viability influences the nature of foreign investment. Hence, population indicates the number of persons found in a given country, region or locality (Iloje, 1972). Nigeria has an estimated population of 140 million people by 2006 census. The average density of approximately 124 persons per square kilometer makes her one of the most densely populated countries in the world. It is claimed that for every four persons found in Africa, one is a Nigerian. It is also agreed that about 64 percent of Nigerians live in rural areas, while the remaining percentage live in urban areas (Ali-Akpajiak, 2003). However, Nigeria's population appears to be growing steadily at an average rate of 2.3-3.0 percent per annum. Going through history, the first census for Nigeria took place in 1911, with a population of 16 million people. Others were 1921-18 million, 1931-20 million, 1952/53-29 million, 1963-56 million, and by 1991 it recorded 88 million people (Eboh, 1995).

Indeed, it is not enough to say that Nigeria is one of the most populous nations in Africa or the world. It would be worth-while to say what is the quality of Nigeria's population? How healthy is the population and what is the effect on productivity? By all standards, Nigeria's population is not healthy at all. And because the population is not healthy, it explains the low productivity which in turn has a surmountable effect on the growth of the Nigerian economy. There are many factors to be considered before one can say that a given population is healthy. This includes the following: Health services, levels of poverty, state of employment and underemployment, levels of education, access to safe drinking water and the quality of the environment.

Concept of Productivity

Productivity is a buzz word and almost everyone uses it. Yet the term productivity means different things to different persons. In spite of what looks like confusion in the use of this term, there are several characteristic features that represent the concept of productivity that could be identified. However, productivity in industrial engineering, is defined as the relation of output (i.e. produced goods) to input (i.e. consumed resources) in the manufacturing transformation process (Akerle, 1991). Productivity could therefore be seen as closely related to the use and availability of resources. Hence, productivity could be reduced if a company's resources are not properly used or if there is a lack of them. Mali (1978) defines productivity as the measure of how resources are being brought together in organizations and utilized for accomplishing a set of results. Thus, by this definition, productivity is seen to be strongly linked to the creation of value. High productivity is achieved when activities and resources in the organization is transformed and in the process create sustainable value.

Productivity is viewed as the instrument for continuous progress and a constant improvement of activities. It is the output per unit of input. Hence, higher productivity connotes achieving the same volume of output with less factor inputs or more volumes of output with the same amount of factor inputs (Obadan and Ojusola, 1999). Thus, increased productivity could result from the reduction in the use of resources, reduction in cost, use of better methods.

Concept of Health

Health is the state of being free from illness. Ill health is caused by insanitary environment, eating of wrong quality or quantity of food, congenital abnormalities, or by contact with harmful chemicals, bacteria, and other harmful micro-organisms (Udoh, 1980). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Achal and Achalu, 1999).

For more than two decades, Nigerian health care system was in shambles and deteriorated abysmally, and was attributed to the country's poor governance and leadership of the military era. With the enthronement of democracy since 1999, the condition has not appreciably changed. Though there is no reliable data to provide as evidence of the amount of money voted each year for the sector by local, state and federal governments. Between 1990 and 2003, the federal government budgeted between 0.2 percent and 2.7 percent for this sector (Ali-Akpajiak, 2003).

Nigeria has three levels of health-care provision- Federal, State and Local Government levels. The Federal Government sets policies and guidelines on health and family planning. States determine policies for services provision. Implementation and provision are the responsibility of the Local Government Areas. Local Government Areas provide primary health-care facilities based in clinics and health centres, such as maternal and allied-care services, preventive care, and basic curative treatment. It is the responsibility of state governments to provide secondary-level care in local hospitals for curative and some preventive services. The Federal Government takes charge of the tertiary level, which includes teaching hospitals. As at 2005, the country paraded 10,149 primary health centres, 936 secondary health care centres, and 51 tertiary health care centres. The conditions and expansions of these care centres have not appreciably change.

Preventable Diseases and Decimation of Nigeria Population

The prevailing diseases within the Nigerian environment are malaria, polio, measles, diarrhea, tetanus, HIV/AIDS, leprosy, tuberculosis, river blindness, guinea worm, vesico vaginal fistula etc. These diseases are of varying degrees. With the above scenario, the state of health of many Nigerians are poor. It is poor because government at various levels pay lip-service to the health sector. Our hospitals lack modern

equipment, qualified staff are inadequate, medicine are in short supply. In this connection, it is becoming difficult if not impossible to deal with diseases even the preventable ones. Indeed, there are preventable diseases such as polio, malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis, river blindness, guinea worm etc. but many Nigerians are dying daily because of the poor state of health sector. But this is not to say that poor health alone are responsible for these unnecessary deaths. Others include poverty, cultural beliefs and attitudes towards orthodox medicine.

However, to show the extent of neglect or less attention in this sector, it is estimated that sixty million children live in Nigeria. The future of this country is in their hands but not much is done in the health sector to keep them healthy for the future roles. For instance in 1995, Nigeria had the highest number of measles reported of all African nations (95,915 cases and 12,393 deaths). In the same year diarrhea claimed 204,400 lives. UNICEF indicates that one in five children in Nigeria dies before the age of five (Gale, 2006). It is translated that 15 percent of all Nigerian children do not live to their fifth birthday. Today, the situation has not shown any significant or appreciable improvement for what it was sixteen years ago.

HIV/AIDS has reached epidemic level in Nigeria. At the end of 2001, the number of people living with it was estimated at 3.5 million and 5.8 percent were adults. The official or known number that died through AIDs that year were estimated at 170,000. The research has indicated that majority of Nigerians living with AIDs are children ranging from ages 15-21. What is the future of these children and Nigerian economy? Leprosy is another disease, and it is estimated that those who are suffering from this disease are more than 170,000. Guinea worm disease records about 19,766 cases. River blindness has estimated cases of more than 15,000 people (Ezeoke, 2007).

Malaria is a killer disease (Ezeoke, 2007). In Nigeria it is difficult to say the actual number of the people suffering from it. By the words of Chukwuani (2004):

The malaria disease is the greatest singular cause of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria... About 30 percent of children under the age of five in Nigeria, die from malaria every year... About 46 percent of an average household income is expended on treatment of malaria, the disease is one of the major causes of poverty in Nigeria... Nearly 30 percent of adults are down with the illness.

There are many reasons for the health sector of the economy being sick. Every year, the three levels of government will budget huge amount of money, but very little will go into the sector. The rest is diverted through corruption (Ukpong, 2006). A good number of Nigerians do not have access to good, reliable and affordable medical services because of high cost of health-care delivery. This explains that, those who cannot afford expensive medical treatment in hospitals

now patronize quacks, others resort to the use of herbs. Some, especially in the rural areas prefer to die instead of being humiliated in hospitals or clinics for lack of money to pay medical fee (Akpan, 2005).

Levels of Poverty and Population

Poverty indicates people who hardly afford a meal a day, cannot cloth themselves, have no access to good drinking water, no access to basic education, no access to good shelter. To say the least a person that lacks the basic means of living constitutes poverty.

Nigeria is a rich country by the current oil production sold in the international market for the past twenty years, yet majority of Nigerians are poor. It is estimated that 55.8 million Nigerians are very poor and live below the universal poverty line of 1 US dollar a day. It also indicates that these poor people are found mainly in rural areas. Because, they are poor and cannot feed adequately, provide good shelter and cannot afford health facilities. Going through historical lane, in the year 2000 life expectancy of Nigerians was only 47 years. Today the situation has not changed because many Nigerians are getting poorer and poorer everyday since the standard of living to a large extent is deteriorating by the day (Omoragbon and Okeke, 2010; Kogbara, 2010).

Levels of Education

Education is the power for development. It liberates the mind, it is a tool that prepares manpower to meet the requirement for modern world in areas such as agriculture, security, health, etc. Research indicates that about 45 percent of Nigerians do not have access to basic education, and out of this number women are the most affected. This ratio of persons acquiring education has nothing to do with population. It is an indication that when people are educated it is a plus because they would know what is of value to themselves – care of themselves and the environment which they live. Nigeria education system is in shambles, with high pupil-to-teacher ratio and poorly equipped infrastructures. Thus meaningful education is the most potent instrument for alleviating and eventually abolishing poverty. Though there exist pockets of illiteracy even in developed economies, it is a bane to development. Many Nigerians, because of poverty cannot afford high school fees for the children. Some, because of culture do not send their children to school. Many governments (local, state) pay lip service to education – on pages of newspapers and television screens. It is common to find urchins everywhere on our streets. The picture and the effect does not showcase Nigeria as a nation that produces and export much crude oil and create much wealth (Akpan, 2010; Manuaka, 2010; Kogbara, 2010; Omoragbon and Okeke, 2010).

Levels of Unemployment and Underemployment

Unemployment is everywhere in developing and developed economies. It is difficult to say the number of

unemployed Nigerians. But as at March 2000, the federal office of statistics claimed that the national unemployment figure was 3.6 percent outside those who have not registered with labour exchanges. The number today is much higher since Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and allied institutions are turning Nigeria graduates in large numbers to the labour market. Again many Nigerians are underemployed, or better still exploited because they lack an alternative for a living. It is not uncommon to see even masters degree holders earning ten thousand naira a month against forty thousand naira it should earn as salary. Good employment has a linkage effect on the health of individuals. Good employment translates to better living conditions which adds growth to health. Good health in turn gingers or motivates one to contribute to the economy. Unfortunately, neither the manpower Board nor Ministry of labour nor the Federal Office of Statistics has accurate data on the unemployment rate in Nigeria (Manuaka, 2010; Kogbara, 2010; Ekpo, 2011).

Access to Safe Water

Water is life. It has been estimated that 40 percent of Nigeria's population have no access to potable water, and only 63 percent have adequate sanitation. The question to be answered is that if people can live without access to safe water, life in itself is worth nothing since water is the life orbit. Meaning that every living creature cannot do without adequate water. That every Nigerian should have access to safe water at all times.

Population and Health – Complimentary Roles

The intercourse between productive population and health is an amalgam of interrelationships arising from pools of congenial interplay. Hence, population is the beneficiary of development, built around health. Development is measured in form of the nation's quality of life and standard of living enjoyed by the people and the healthiness of the mind and the environment. Population process constitutes an important component of development through its behaviour. For instance high fertility is a product of high level of health-care. Population is a human resource, for it to develop it must be propelled by good health-sector monitoring. The relationship between population growth, human development, resource adequacy and the environment has thus gained global significance, especially since the historic United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, 1972 (Collins, 2007).

The aim of every nation is to develop its human population into a productive sector. The link between labour force and health sector of any economy is inseparable. Public health has been and is still an important factor in human development. The health sector in any economy constitutes an important sector because when the citizens, especially the growing and productive age are healthy they become the pivot of the economy. A healthy population will contribute positively to the growth and developments of the

economic and social sector. A healthy population is vital for economic growth since unhealthy people often consume more of society's resource than they produce (Akpan, 2005).

Health is wealth, Horbison quoted by Onwuchekwe (2003) asserts that human resources are the wealth of a nation. According to him, human resources are not mere capital, not even income or material resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations. Capital and national resources are passive factors of production. Human beings are the ultimate and indeed the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build socio-economic and political organization and carry forward national development. The ultimate is that when the health of the people is on "steam" that the hope of the nation is fulfilled.

Implications of Population Pressure on Productivity

Given that children make up 50 percent of Nigerians population translates that they do not contribute much to the economy, rather they tend to consume much from it through provision of health, educational and recreational facilities. Children domestic workers do contribute a little to the economy. In this connection, the budgetary allocation of government in areas of health would be enormous-building of hospitals, clinics and other allied health centres where non-existed, training and retraining of medical staff of various grades, maintenance of these health centres and staff, expansion of facilities to cope with the increase in the number of people-both old and the growing children. All these are capital intensive hence become huge expenditure on government. In the same corollary, education is capital intensive. On the part of government, building of schools at all levels of educational strata to enhance accommodation for the growing children become necessary. Training and retraining of teachers at various levels to boost manpower; expansion and provision of teaching materials, all these also consume much money on the part of government.

In spite of the level of corruption in the country, government has provided funds for health, education, infrastructure and it appears as if nothing is being done; then what would have been the situation where there was non provided? In other words little that is provided makes it difficult to meet with the demands of the society-educationally, health or in area of recreation.

Again, though the actual statistics are difficult to come by, about 12 percent of the population are underemployed and unemployed, this means that this group contribute very little to assist in the growth of Nigerian economy. As earlier put across, a University graduate is suppose to earn N28,000 at entry into the State Civil Service, but because there is no hope in sight as regards employment, he now 'picks a job' with a private organization which pays him N10,000 per month. Even at that, he is under threat that he could be sacked anytime if discovered that his performance does

not meet the set standard of the organization. A Secondary School Certificate holder earning N3,000 per month against N15,000 per month. All these are examples of underemployment. Another example are the casual labourers in multinational companies, who perform functions as full-time employers but are paid less. This too constitutes underemployment.

Picking that, the total number of Nigerians who are sick make up 12 percent, they tend to consume more and are unproductive. If the aged are included, it means that the number of people in the workforce whether in public or private service are too small to propel the economy. The economic index is not used, but if we go by WHO definition of health, very many Nigerians are sick. There are many Nigerians in our rural areas who are very poor, physically emaciated, mentally stressed, socially unfit and psychologically unbalanced. And it is this group that the food others in urban centres depend on. The issue of ratio given by WHO on a doctor to patient or nurse to patient is not applicable to Nigerians because the few Nigerian doctors and some nurses are migrating for greener pastures in Western countries and Persian Gulf countries. In this connection, few Nigerian bourgeoisies and people in government use government fund to go on overseas trips for check-ups. What happens to the "talakawa" less privilege? In this connection, the quality of population in Nigeria is weak, and only manage to propel the economy, that perhaps explains the low level of productivity in some sectors of the economy such as teaching. Nigeria by 2006 population estimate has 140 million people. Considering the resources of this country, it is not overpopulated. According to Obasanjo in his speech at the Democracy day opined that "Nigeria has a strong and virile population that is capable of immense productive activity, if the conditions in which they labour are equitable and just" (The Guardian, Tuesday, May 30, 2000). The speech espoused on the 'conditions' in which "they labour are equitable and just". It means there are problems within the system that is difficult to address at the present state of development.

Let us dismiss the fact that Nigeria is overpopulated; she is capable of sustaining the population if the resources available are harnessed and distributed equitably. The crux of the matter is health and productivity. There are many factors that are responsible for the poor state of health of individuals and its influence on productivity. The reality is that every year certain percentage of budgetary allocation goes to this sector of the economy (statistics not available). It is reasoned that there is no correlation between the amount used and what is on the ground. Why nothing seem to happen is because of corruption. Again, Obasanjo contends that:

everywhere and all the time! Corruption was not only rife, it has eaten so deeply into the marrow of our existence that looters and fraudsters had become our heroes and it seemed we could no longer place any faith in honesty and decency and hardwork. It appears that our country had gone so far on the road for self

destruction, that even otherwise reasonable men and women had begun to feel that the very idea of Nigeria was a huge and cynical joke. (The Guardian, Tuesday, May 30, 2000).

So the reality is that thousands of Nigerians do not have access to good medical care. Most hospitals and indeed health centres only exist in name. Health equipment and facilities are grossly inadequate. Besides, poverty has a role to play in the health of many Nigerians. According to World Bank assessment, 70 percent of Nigerians live below internationally recognized poverty line and subsist on an income of less than \$1 per day (Ufot, 2010; Manuaka, 2010).

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to show that Nigeria is rich, has a large population and indeed market but the purchasing power is embarrassingly weak. That the quality of population is plagued by preventable diseases, poor education, poor medical facilities and an unfriendly environment. The nation is rich but the people do not enjoy the form of its riches because the government is unwilling to improve on the standard of living of the people. The dividend of democracy is achieved on paper. There is poverty in the nation. Well placed individuals, organizations and government should stand up and restructure the economy to make life meaningful and improve the quality of the population for Nigerians to be productive so as to benefit from the global market. Private individuals and organizations should build industries and mob the excess unemployed youths by offering them employment in these industries. Individuals and organizations too can set up hospitals, clinics and equip them thus complementing government efforts in this direction, in addition would reduce employment and provide health care for the people. Health care should be free in this country for all to have access to it and in turn have a good life. Government and big companies should assist in the provision of basic infrastructures such as good roads especially in rural communities – this would enhance movement of goods, food to the urban centres. The rural communities also need power (electricity) that would enhance production in small scale industries and also reduce urban drift. Globalization of economies implies give and take, our contribution to the global market would depend on production, hence infrastructural facilities are sine qua non in this direction. Above all the issue of security should be taken seriously by individuals, government at all levels, if Nigeria is to be part of the global market.

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