ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION ON POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

The role of human population growth in economics and national development has been a centre of several empirical studies. However, there has not been a general consensus on the most effective model for population control. It is against this background that this paper sought to investigate the perception of secondary school students on population control measures in Delta State of Nigeria. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire containing population control measures was used to obtain information on the perception of secondary school students. The instrument has construct validity and a reliability coefficient of 0.83. Percentage, Analysis of variance and F-test were used for data analysis. Seven measures of population control were assessed. The result shows that the most preferred measure by students is population control through education and counselling. Perception of students did not differ significantly. The paper concludes that education and counselling should be provided to the students on population control.

Keywords: Youths’ Perception, Population Control, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Anyawocha (1993), population is the total number of persons or people living within a geographical area at a particular time. There are about 5.8 billion human beings on the planet (Sullivan, 2003). The world may soon be more than 7 billion people and the number of persons born into poverty may rise (Watson, 2013). Population control is an attempt to control the number of people in a place to a manageable size. It is the practice of artificial modification of the rate of growth of a human population. The most common form of human population control is the limiting reduction of the human birth rate which can be achieved through the education of the women. For example, in certain countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea, compulsory education for girls has been attributed to the lower fertility and birth rates.

The increase in population in most countries had led to economic and social problems. These include low per capital income, shortage of food, unemployment, overcrowding of cities and different social crimes. These problems call for control and a well-planned population. There was a need to assess the perception of secondary school students on population control measures. The measures determined include: counselling, decrease in birth rate, abortion, sterilization, infanticide, family planning method and repatriation of some foreigners. Some of
these measures have been observed in Wikipedia (2013). It is difficult to determine the perception of student on population control except through the assessment. This study helped to assess how secondary school students see or feel about population control measures. This became necessary to guide them before they marry and begin to have children.

Pikus (2009) suggests that human population control is the exercise of synthetically altering the speed of growth of a human population. In the past, human population control has been applied by restraining the population's birth rate, usually by government directive, and has been undertaken as a response to features including high or growing levels of poverty, environmental concerns, religious grounds, and overpopulation. Population control can involve methods that improve people's lives by giving them greater control of their reproduction; some programs have exposed them to misuse.

In the same vein, Smith (2008) argued that those who have studied the rapidly increasing population, all attempts to deal with environmental deprivation will fail because they deal with the symptoms of the trouble, not the dilemma itself. The problem, they clearly state, is overpopulation. None would argue that the population is growing. Where there were one billion jaws to feed, there are now six billion. Many have hypothesized what the actual carrying capability of the earth is, with estimates ranging from less than the present population to as high as 50 billion. Such wide-ranging estimates, supposed by experts, are one reason the population problem goes largely unnoticed.

Many people worry that population growth diminishes resources. Also that it can trigger social or economic disaster if it is not contained. Most of the projected population growth during this century will take place in developing nations. These countries have faced many challenges in recent decades, including low levels of education, poor health standards, poverty, scarce housing, natural resource depletion, wars, and economic and political domination by other countries. In the poorest countries, future population growth is likely to make environmental deterioration worse. However, the relationship between population and the environment is complex. Human societies' impacts on the environment are a function of three major, interconnected elements: population size, affluence or consumption, and technology (Smith, 2012).

Growth rate reductions are parallel, with international migration aside, mainly because postulations about fertility change are similar. The substantial gap that currently exists—but is projected to narrow—between the total fertility in Africa and total fertility in every other key area. A gap in productiveness levels also exists between the other major areas of the world, but by 2050 levels are expected to meet in a narrow group between 1.84 and 1.92 Children per woman. Europe will take the longest to enter this band, and will do so through rising fertility, in contrast to falling fertility in other major areas (United Nations, 2004).

The study of fertility and productive behaviour usually concentrates on persons, couples, families, social communities, ethnic groups, nations or generations. These persons and groups are examples for various decision making units with different purpose functions and specific restrictions for their generative behaviour. In this role, the elementary units for fertility decisions are the generations (e.g., Herwig, 2004).

In the view of Aldinger (2003) youth all over the world have common needs in order to accomplish full and strong development: a positive and stable family life; an acceptance about their bodies, including the emotional and substantial capacities that enable them to have sexual relations and reproduce; an awareness of population issues and how these issues will affect them; and the knowledge and skills to deal with these matters responsibly, now and in the future. With these resources, young people are more liable to thrive in school, have value of life and relationships, and give to the economy and productivity of their countries. Without them, they face interrupted schooling, personal insecurities, poor health, and diminished economic chances. Herwig (2004) noted that the generations may be considered as the most natural units of making fertility decisions because the mere existence of any generation depends on the fertility decisions of the preceding ones. There are many emotional, cultural, social and
economic interactions between the behavioural units making fertility applicable decisions. This is especially factual for the generations which are very intensively connected by family ties, by kinship and by the societal and institutional regulations like the economic activities in the educational system, the health system and the pension system.

Researchers have argued that required fertility falls as incomes grow and that family planning has basically no independent influence. These programs sought to speed the demographic transition by persuading citizens that having great numbers of children was dire for the nation and for individual families. Generally they focused on educating married couples about birth control and distributing contraceptives, but some programs took more coercive approaches. With relevance to this, China imposed a limit of one child per family in 1979, with two children allowed in special cases (Smith, 2012).

1.1 PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to assess the perception of secondary school students on various population measures. Specifically, the study determined the perception of students by their gender and school-type. The following questions guided the study:

- What is the perception of students on population control measures?
- What is the perception of male and female students on population control?
- What is the perception of students in their school-type on population control?

Based on the study objectives, the following hypotheses were analyzed on 0.5 significance level. The hypotheses are:

- There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on population control.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of students in boys’, Girls’, and Mixed secondary schools on population control.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are so many population control measures or methods. The measures considered in this study include; Education and Counselling, Decrease in birth rate, Abortion, Sterilization, Infanticide, Family planning and Repatriation of illegal immigration and migration control. Watson (2013) pointed out that there are so many population control measures, but the best is education. Mallum and Obe (2003) recommended population education as well as guidance and counselling for population control. With this recommendation, it is expected that when students receive counselling about marriage early enough; they would be able to control their family population.

The students need enough counselling in the secondary schools as recommended by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981) in the National Policy on Education (NPE). There is the awareness of Guidance and counselling in Nigeria as noted in the National Policy on Education. There is also the Counselling Association of Nigeria with branches in different States, helping to promote guidance and counselling programmes in schools and other establishments. “Counselling has been used to denote a wide range of procedures including advice giving, encouragement, information giving, test interpretation, and psychoanalysis” (Shertzer, & Stone, 1974 p. 18). Similarly, counselling assists individuals to establish some personal meaning for their behaviour, to develop and clarify a set of goals and value of future behaviour (Blocher, 1974; Ojiah, 2003). Generally, counselling is a relationship in which a trained counsellor helps an individual to understand and solve adjustment problems. This will help individuals to be
conscious in planning their family size, thereby helping to control populations. One of the areas yet to be exploited is the awareness and counselling for population control right from the secondary school where counselling services are being practiced by professional counsellors. When the perceptions of the students are investigated it will help to counsel them. It should be pointed out that secondary school is a very crucial stage in the life of students. Some marry after this stage while some proceed to tertiary school and marry after graduation. They will be better prepared to control the size of their families because of the counselling received at the secondary school stage.

The issue of population control in the past has not been widely accepted by scholars. McGurn (1996) pointed out that most Economists believe that as long as there is availability of food and social amenities, there is no need for population control. Two main factors have been identified as responsible for the population increase. These include: increase in birth rate and immigration. The approach adopted by some countries to control for these two factors have been criticized, Monteith (2003) observed that one of the most difficult concepts for Americans to accept is that of human being dedicated to coercive population control and genocide. He criticized the financing of the Red Chinese programme of forced abortion, forced sterilization, infanticide and control of the numbers of live births as well as the United Nations family planning programme. Some countries forcefully repatriate their foreigners.

In Nigeria, the issue of population control depends on male and female who are responsible for reproduction of children. Most couples find it difficult to control population. It could be that they want more children or to have both sexes (male and female). Sometimes they are influenced by culture and ignorance. Some may want more children so that they could help them in their farms, places of work or business. Some parents are influenced by religion. Christianity recommends one man, one wife. Islam requires a man to marry four wives as long as he can cater for them and the children. Pagans also require the man to marry as much as he wishes. Most cities are crowded due to population increase. Government has been making efforts to control population though there is the awareness on family planning, the number of children to a family, deemphasizing rush to cities by developing the rural areas and check on foreigners entering the country. In-spite of government efforts to control the population, it has continued to increase.

There are various population control measures. Some have been identified. These include education and counselling, decrease in birth rate, abortion, sterilization, infanticide family planning method, repatriation of illegal immigration and public enlightenment programmes. There was a need to make a judgment on these measures. Therefore, the study investigated the assessment of students’ perception on the population control measures. Assessment is a form of judgment which helps to determine students’ behaviour. That is how they think, feel and react to programmes or issues. These aspects of behaviour could be determined through valid and reliable techniques such as test questionnaire, observation, rating scale and anecdotal record. It is also the extent to which objectives of a programme are being achieved. (Gronlund, 1985). However, the study helped to assess how secondary school students think, feel and react on population control measures. This became necessary to guide them before they marry or begin to have children.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study focuses on assessment of students’ perception on population control measures. Specifically, assessment is the use of valid and reliable instruments such as test, questionnaire, interview, observation among others in obtaining information about individual behaviour upon which judgement is made. The study used a questionnaire to assess students’ perception on population control. The major task of assessment is to analyze information provided by test, interview and observation among others and to combine the information to make complex and important judgement about individuals (Osadebe, 2004; Murphy &
There are different types of assessment; these include Cognitive assessment, Affective assessment, and Psychomotor assessment. An assessment could be single or continuous. The study is on Affective assessment. It implies the use of questionnaires, interview and observation among others to obtain information about how students see or feel about the population control measures. This became necessary because the students will grow or after school graduation would want to marry. Therefore, information from the assessment of their perception would help to guide them about marriage life. The perception of students is how they see and feel about the concept of population control measure. It is through assessment that it would be possible to determine the extent of their perception and guide them before marriage. There are related studies on perception as in case of Osadebe (2005) and Nwose (2008).

The study is a 2 x 3 factorial design. Gender (male and female) and school-type (Boys, Girls and Mixed) of students’ perception on population control were determined. The sample consisted of 1000 students randomly drawn from 20 secondary schools. The sample was stratified on 500 male and 500 female students randomly selected from senior secondary schools. Simple random sampling of balloting was used to select 20 secondary schools from 320. The sample of students was stratified on their gender for equal representation.

The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire titled Students Population Control Inventory (SPCI). It was a 5-point Likert Scale designed to obtain information on population control. Seven major areas were drawn in the questionnaire in line with the population control measures identified in the study. These include: Education and Counselling; Decrease in birth rate; Abortion; sterilization; infanticide; family planning; and Repatriation of illegal immigrant migration control.

The instrument (SPCI) was constructed with high face and construct validities. The instrument contains the population control measures. The items were analyzed with the use of Cronbach Alpha. There was a multiple response such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. A reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained as the measure of internal consistency. The coefficient was significant at .05. This made the instrument very suitable for the study. Percentages were used to analyze the research questions. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and F-test was applied to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1 What is the perception of students on population control measures?

Table 1: Percentage (%) analysis on the perception of student on population control measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education &amp; Counselling</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decrease in birth rate</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sterilization</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Infanticide</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family planning</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Repatriation of illegal immigrant migration control</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Shows the percentage response of students on population control measures. Most of the students favoured the use of education and counselling representing 50.1%. Others include Decrease in birth rate 9.8%, Abortion 7.6%. Sterilization 1.1%, infanticide 1.2%. Family planning 20%, Repatriation of illegal immigrant and migration control 10.2%.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of students on population control?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of gender perception on population control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates the percentage response of male and female students on population control measures when the 5-point scale was collapsed to Agree, Undecided, and Disagreed. It was still possible to observed gender response respectively. The percentage score of 42, revealed that most male students agreed on population control. Naturally, some male students were undecided (1.2%) while others disagreed (7.5%). The table also presents 39.2% as the response of female students who agreed on population control. 0.7% of them disagreed while 9.4% were undecided. Generally, the overall percentage response of 81.2 showed that majority of male and female students agreed on the issue of population control. Again, if the students were undecided while 16.9% disagreed.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of students in Boys, Girls and Mixed secondary schools on population control through counselling?

Table 3: Percentage analysis of students’ perception in their school-type on population control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL-TYPE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy’s School</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ School</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed School</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the percentage response of students in their various school-type on population control. A total of 76.3% agreed on population control; 7.2% were undecided and 31.3% disagreed. Hypothesis I and II were verified with ANOVA and F-test as shown below.

Table 4: Two-way ANOVA and F-test analysis on gender and school-type of students’ perception on population control through Counseling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Variance</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>Calculated dF</th>
<th>Critical Fat .05</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Students</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-type</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>15705.2</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15960.4</td>
<td>999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 presents the results of hypotheses I and II. The result of the analysis of Hypothesis I shows that the calculated F-ratio of 1.22 was less than the critical F of 3.85 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis one was accepted. The result implied that there was no gender perception difference on population control. Both male and female students support population control. Also, the result of the analysis of hypothesis II, indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 0.92 was less than the critical F of 3.00 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis two was accepted. Both null hypotheses I and II were accepted.

The results presented in table 1 show that most of the students favoured the use of education and counselling. This seems to be the effect of guidance and counselling services on the students. The secondary schools used in this study have functioning guidance counselors. The students perceived counseling as a way of solving their life problems. The finding supported the recommendation of Mallum and Obe (2003) that population education as well as guidance and counselling should serve as a panacea to population control. Similarly, Watson (2013) supported that the best solution to population control is through education.

The overall result of the study suggests that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on population control in that, most of the students responded favourably to population control through counselling. The findings relate to the report of the Pope Turning Tide Against Abortion (2003) that the population of children have been saved through counselling offered at various counselling centres. However, few students were undecided while others disagreed on population control. This revealed that students generally need enough information about population control measures.

The results of this study attempt to answer some controversial issues on population control. Johnston (1996) thought that no solution could be found for population control. Moore (1999) criticized United Nations Population Fund for its punitive programmes to control population, such as abortion genocidal one-couple, one child policy, sterilization, use of contraceptive, among others. Thus, the providing of counselling to individuals early in life on population control seems a better solution. Students should be well educated to see the need for population control than being forced or enticed into it.

5. CONCLUSION

Perception of students on population control has been assessed. It was observed that most of the students favoured the use of education and counselling for population control. The schools used in this study have counsellors. The favourable response of students on population control through counselling revealed the impact of guidance and counselling in schools. Most students perceive counselling as the best way of solving their problems. Therefore, guidance and counselling services should be provided to on population control measures; there should be counselling centres in places of work, religious places and communities. This will help to reach out to both married and unmarried persons, counselling on population control should be a continuous process. There should be enough information on population control measures; counsellors should discourage punitive population control measures. These include abortion, dumping of babies in refuse bin, toilet, and public places, the school curriculum for guidance and counselling should include counselling for good family planning.

Assessing the perception of students on the population control measures, shows education and counselling as highly favoured. This is the effect of education and counselling on the students. They perceive them as ways of solving their life problems. The study revealed that gender perception did not differ significantly. Most students agreed, few were undecided and others disagreed on population control measures. This implies that students generally need guidance on population control. Subsequently, there should be individual and group counselling.

Counselling at secondary school level should serve as a preventive measure. The counselling service should help the students for a better plan and manage family size in future.
Hence, they should only have children, when they are married and capable of caring for the family. They should not use any punitive measure or be enticed to control population

REFERENCES


