
POPULATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Today there is national and international concern on the issue of economy and population. Particularly in African Nations whose population is being frowned at in relation to their economic problems, but in Islamic perspective high population growth is a blessing because of it is potential to market forces. This paper is going to focus on the issues of economic development and how population affects it. Therefore in the analysis, the paper will be concentrated on economic development in a developing country like Nigeria. However, in all the theories that will be analyzed, a new perspective base on Islamic principles will be highlighted. Therefore the Islamic conception of development and population, and how they relate to each other will be tackled, so as to show areas of emphasis on growth and development.

Considering the Malthusian and other theorists of population, that brought national and international communities to be highly pessimistic on the issue of population increase in relation to economic development in the world, as a result many conferences and symposia were held and are still holding in various countries of the world. Some of these gatherings were sponsored by the United Nations, African nations and some other tertiary institutions, for instance the international human right in Tehran (1967), Cairo and Beijing China (1995) for the purpose of population checks, and equal opportunities for all sexes in the world. This is contrary to the issue of national development in Islamic perspective.

It should be clear here that, population is the most valuable ingredient for the development of any developing country, because the colonialists oppressive machineries evacuated the most active population of Africa and developed their nations from primary, industries during the period of industrial revolution, and it was after they were satisfied with slaves human labour then they started exporting the African slaves into the African continent in areas like Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is exploitation which came through the process of contemporary neo-colonialism or is another form of exploitation of human ingenuity and monopoly of international economy. They refused the Africans to develop politically, economically and otherwise, in order to allow their industrial products to penetrate into African markets and to strengthen the economic dependency syndrome between the developing economies and the developed world. Strategically therefore, they spent a lot of money on decreasing African population which Nigeria is inclusive through the international aids on drugs and population policy, such the use of contraceptives drugs, celibacy, child birth holydays and Wars. The scramble of America, and Western friends, the military warheads into Somalia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Chad, to mentioned just a few is a good testimony in the process of decreasing African population which is believed to be an asset rather than liability to National Development.

Due to the nature of political system which Nigeria inherited from colonial powers on distribution of social products unjustifiably push the majority Nigerian populace in poverty stricken families suffering from various infectious and other communicable diseases, state of insecurity and rely too much on the international loans and aids, rather than belief on justice, equity and fundamental human rights which in Islamic perspective are the basics foundation for economic development.

This paper intends to highlights the seven basic responsibilities of individual adult for a sound basic foundation for economic development, some theories of population and Islamic concept of population and their roles in economic development. Assessment will be made which if adopted will bring an end to the economic stagnation based on population and that will have a very comprehensive and all encompassing suitable, and long lasting socio-economic system in Nigeria and for easier understanding the paper will clearly explain its conceptual framework.

Population

Population at the surface connotes the total number of items in a particular place and at a certain time, but for the context of this discussion on demography the international encyclopedia of the social sciences defines population as

“...the quantitative study of human populations. Its basic materials are censuses, vital statistics and increasingly simple survey. Its central concerns are the measurement and discovery of uniformities in the basic processes of human birth, death, population movement and population growth”

Economic Development

The concept of development has been looked at as multi-dimensional process which involves change in structure and certain attitudes and combination of growth and changes standard of living of the majority people in the country. For instance in the words of Todaro (1976)

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“... Development as multi-dimensional involving changes in Structures, attitude and institutions as well as the accelerated Economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty

Economic development can also be seen as a plan action; that is as a consciously planned and monitored process of growth and change and it should be for a long time process, Ikwumelu (1992) Opined that the National economic development plan which was the first in Nigeria in 1962 and that of vision 2010, etc. are good, so that the nation can have a bearing or direction to cater for its citizens the available means of production for high qualitative, and qualitative out put it also involve the equitable distribution of social products like medical facilities, provision of good drinking water good road network systems and social security for the comfort of individual.

National Development

National development, according to Yantumaki (1995) is the process through which a nation seeks to improve the condition of life, and living standard of its citizens. it implies a continuous process of deliberate planned efforts towards achieving the good life It is seen a the process through which the people of a nation seek to improve their control over the National Environment with the objectives of maximizing utilization of the available resources that could be found in order to make life better and easier” Yantumaki (1995). Ikwumelu (1992) pointed out that National Development planning in Nigeria started in 1962 with the first National Development plan 1962-1966. Second National Development plan came up in 1970-1974. This plan aimed among other things at

achieving the objectives of doubling the per capital real income in Nigeria by 1985, thereafter came the third National Development plan of 1981-1982: 1985-1990 plan and finally the 1995-2010.

Islam

Islam is a religion of Allah. In the Qur'an Allah says "the religion before Allah is Islam (submission to his will) ...Q319 and Islam is a complete way of life covering every aspect of Muslim's life from cradle to grave. What ever a person does or wants from going to toilet, wearing cloth, removing shoes, table habit, to saying daily prayers, giving Zakkat, from going to bed, to business Islam provides guidelines for everything. ... even in social aspect people's perception of marriage is greatly influence by their religion. Socially, the concept of marriage among the Muslim world has been found to be influenced by Islam, but here there is some noticeable influenced by customs as religious influence in regarding to social life and living. Marriage is viewed as the only acceptable way of getting virtuous offspring multiplying the family and the only means for betterment and advancement of mankind. Prophet (S.A.W) said

Marry women whose love demonstrate love who are blessed with capacity to reproduce because your ~~Academic Excellence~~ give me a sense of pride amongst other prophets on the day of judgment

Islamic Provision for Economic Development

As earlier pointed out that economic development is a process through which a nation seeks to improve the condition of life, living standard of its citizens, and eradication of absolute poverty, Rodney (1972) reiterated that

...a society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with environment...is dependent on the extent to which they understand the law of nature (science) ...they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology) and the manner in which work is organised

This shows that economic development can take place through a healthy competition, interdependence among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. In this process of interdependence, there are seven fundamental human rights, and obligations stipulated by Islam, and if Nigerians can observe and practice these rights and obligations Nigeria can be a viable nation within short period of time and these are

1. The relationship between you and your God. This obligation is emphasizing the sincerity of individual and believing that whatever you do or make that God is watching you.
2. The relationship between you and your parents. Mother and father must be obeyed and you must provide their needs, wants as far as the needs are not prohibited, such as hard drugs or alcoholism or stealing.
3. You and your family; Islam obliges you to provide your family with all the necessary things for comfort of life provided they are not against the law of the country or prohibited
4. The relationship between you and your relatives: it is necessary to help your relatives in any legal way to show your charity, gifts, visiting them, and any help either in cash or in kind.
5. You and your neighbors: - you must protect the rights and reputation of your neighbors. The prophet (S.A.W) said when he was receiving the rights of his neighbors; he was thinking that before the end of message he would have been told that if a person dies, he would be inherited by his neighbors.
6. The relationship between you and your work place. You must show signs of interest and be hardworking, trustworthy, commitment, straight forward and dedication and if you assimilate these attributes, you can survive any where in the world.
7. The relationship between you and your country. Your country must be protected by you; you must obey the laws of your people, and protect the interest of the nation.

If everybody can observe and practice these seven basic rights and obligations, the issue of corruption and rapaciousness will be a matter of history and the country will have a very sound and strong economic base.

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The Place and Role of Population in Economic Development in Nigeria

The western scholars have strongly agreed that industrialization absorbs more people than any sector of economy particularly the primary industries. Therefore, they have also agreed that manufacturing industries should be scattered throughout the geographical area in any developing economies like Nigeria. Rostow (2003) observed five stages for economic development, though some Africans criticized the theory, but his contribution to development is quite notable. The theory observed African society or Nigeria as a developing nation as characterized by:

1. Traditional Society

That anything is primitive as far as modern man is concerned. For instance in modern agriculture and traditional way of farming, old method, old and crude implements are used and national customs and religion are still in the minds of the people and these must have caused a low in productivity. Therefore, in order to reach the stage, this traditionalism must be done away with.

2. Pre-condition for the Take Off

This stage is transitional, but economically significant changes will be noticed through the emergence of new class, and political consciousness will also be increased. The rural dwellers get money to invest and the comfort of citizens in any term is development.

3. The Take Off Stage

This stage is regarded as economic growth of the nation whereas the majority of the populace is self reliant and it is no more regarded as traditional society. Three points must be noticed here, namely

- i. there must be arise in the rate of productive investment
- ii. There must be the development of one more substantial manufacturing sector with high rate of growth.
- iii. The emergence of political, social and institutional framework which will exploit the impulsiveness for the development.

4. The stage of Drive to Maturity

This stage is noticed with economic demonstration of technology and entrepreneur will produce not everything but anything that people wanted to be produced.

5. That stage of Mass Consumption

This stage is characterized as leading sectors shift towards the production of durable consumer goods and services. Incomes have reached the level that clothing, food and shelter are no longer main consumption needs of the worker. Things like radio, television, refrigerators, automobile, music equipment, begin to interest the consumers.

Academic Excellence

Therefore if this theory is to be adopted the population must have a leader who will work it out, and the nation must have accurate demographic data for research and development (R and D) in order to have even distribution of social amenities such as roads, water, light and clinics and employ some of the seven human rights as mentioned earlier. Though the theory is contrary to the Islamic perspective on the issue of economic development, because the first stage is characterized as the traditional way of life and we have to do away with our traditionalism, if we want to develop. But China and Saudi Arabia are developed nations, and they go along with their traditions.

Malthus (1760-1834) is quoted by Clark (1977) as pointing out that

“Population, Malthus, claimed, tended to increase in geographical progression. The growth of productivity of agriculture on the other, stated, could only be in arithmetical progression”

Malthus argued that population is increasing at a faster rate than food production, thereby creating an imbalance between population and food supply, and if this trend continues, the world would not be able to feed the growing population. On the positive checks, Malthus advocated the death of population growth, through poverty, famine, flood, diseases, earthquakes, draught and any other means of natural calamities. While the preventive checks consist of the use of contraceptive methods, abortion, late marriage and other means that can cause infertility and high death rates.

One can make a close look at Nigerian hospitals today, in fact the drugs are not available and the little ones are for sale, but all the drugs in the family planning unit cum consultancy services are free of charge. This shows clearly that Nigeria imbibes the Malthusian theory of population for national development, by employing the preventive checks.

Islamic Concept of Population and Its Role in Economic Development

Antinatalists did not agree with the preventive methods of population. They believe that virginity is the highest form of human existence, therefore abortion, infanticides, and divorce are not allowed. Population growth is regulated by Allah. “Kill not your children for fear of want’ we shall provide substance for them as well as for you... Qur’an 17:31

Judith (1984) quoted by Sterba (1984) in “the defense of abortion” that

The development of human being from conception through birth into childhood is continuous, then it is said to draw a line to choose a point in this development and say, before this point it is a person, is to make an arbitrary choice, a choice for which in the nature of things no good reason can be given

Population growth is not a real problem because the issue of development and underdevelopment is a Western concept. Todaro (1992) believes that: -

~~*Population and Economic Development in Nigeria...*~~
Problem is not population growth but some other issues... that population growth is a false issue deliberately created by dominant rich countries, agencies, and institutions to keep Less Developed Countries (L D C) in their underdeveloped and dependent condition that for many countries and regions of the third

World population growth is in fact desirable.

Islam views population growth as a stimulus for development apart from seeing population as one of the basis for social changes, but also in terms of political participation and awareness of the territorial natural endowment (like Nigeria) people will struggle for freedom of their country from economic and political exploitation by the western capitalists and their bureaucratic agents in Nigeria. This point is supported by Clark (1967) one of the exponents of Marxism in his logical conclusion quoted by Weeks (1986 p 355) thus;

Social and economic injustice result simultaneously from the lack (slowness) of economic development, and the (erroneous) belief that there is a population problem... cause and effect relationship exists between population growth and economic development – that poverty, hunger and other social welfare problems are as a result of unjust social and economic institutions not population growth

The problems mentioned above are the cankerworms for economic development in Nigeria. The scope of psychological perception of population will affect many Nigerians to put seriousness in stimulating various communities to resist economic depression and living standard. But population growth can cause an increase in the ability to control the environment and shape the variables for National development and many communities will now be able to exploit the opportunities for economic growth which existed before but were left unutilized.

The Islamic concept of population cannot be divorced from the issue of population growth. In Islamic perception, it is the institution of marriage which originally means UNITING. Marriage is a social contract which every Muslim must enter into unless there are special reasons.

“And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your female slaves if they are needy. Allah will make them free from want out of this grace” Qur’an (24:32-33)

The family is the real unit of human race and the first cohesive force which makes civilisation possible and owes its existence solely to marriage. If there is no marriage then there can be no family, no ties of kinship, no force uniting the different elements of humanity and consequently, no civilisation. It is through the family that humanity is held together and civilisation made possible. It is therefore possible to admit the necessity of procreation and the importance of chastity as a cementing and healing bond in a ~~family~~ Accident-free family maintaining that by abolishing the family system and evolving alternative institution for the training and up bring of children. Marriage and family life may allow a large amount of sexual latitude to men and women without any serious social disturbances and if we can get rid of family life and evolve other means for the preservation of human race and the education of children, modesty, chastity and all other values will lose their necessity. But what is the possibility of success in this attempt? Is it possible to abolish family or is it rooted in our social nature?

Thus, it is possible to see family as the basic unit of social organization is likely to out last the forces tending to destroy it. A stable family is necessary not only for the happiness and the development of husband and wife but also for the proper growth and development of the future generations. Conditions and forces which tend to shake the stability of the family should be countered and removed in the interest of the society and individual. If these basic facets are admitted, chastity becomes a value of the highest social order and there is need to safeguard it at all cost.

Conclusion

It is observed that there is serious attention being paid to population related issues especially of recent. This attention by the world community is mostly hinged on the premise that, there is population explosion especially in the developing and underdeveloped nations of the world. The prevailing hunger, poverty, famine, squalor that is often found in these nations is associated with unplanned population growth or an absence of population control policies or measures. To this end, the developed and industrialized nations keep on trumpeting the need for the so called third world nations to check the rate of their population growth. However there is another view of the phenomenon of population which this paper has attempted to highlight in Islamic population growth should not in any way be checked as the human population is the highest natural resources from the All- mighty. The human capacity for procreation and regeneration is the highest gift of nature to man and indeed, to any creature that is capable of procreation for without that power, any species would be extinct in no time. The position therefore is that instead of looking at population growth as a threat to national development, it should be viewed as an asset of national development because it is the human resources that have the power to explore, exploit and utilize other natural resources for national development.

Recommendations

1. Whenever the government tackles the issues of overpopulation, under population or high rate of population growth, the government seems to concentrate on Western theory of population. So it is

- equally important for government to consider that Islam offers solution to any problem mentioned above.
2. Islamic economics should be taught together with modern economics at all levels of the educational institutions (primary, secondary and university) by so doing peace, unity and stability will prevail.
 3. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should consider this issue critically, particularly the seven basic human rights and obligations and mobilize the populace towards this in order to have Population and Economic Development in Nigeria.
 4. The Petroleum Trust Fund should have more power to construct low cost houses in Local Government Areas in order to accommodate the growing population.
 5. Government should make direct funding to the department of agriculture in the Universities in the country in order to produce more food for consumption and sell the surplus to neighboring countries.
 6. Individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGO) should increase their support on donations, charity, and alms-giving, Zakkat to the Motherless babies' homes and hospitals and Islamiya schools.

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