

AN INVESTIGATION INTO COVERAGE LEVEL OF VITAL STATISTICS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Vital statistics derived from the aggregation of individual records provides the tools for the demographic analyses needed for economic, social planning and development, including rates and trends of population growth distribution. In view of the importance of vital statistics, the extent of the national coverage was examined with a view to determine the influence of education, gender and location (rural and urban). National population Commission's data on live births and deaths registration for 1994 - 2007 were used and summarized using frequency tables, percentages and bar chart. The study found that live births and deaths registrations were very low until 2007 when it picked a little. More males were registered than females while education up to secondary / teacher training had significant impact on vital statistics registration while higher education did not. More registrations took place in urban than rural areas due to accessibility of registration centers and awareness. On the whole, the coverage of vital statistics in Nigeria is low and this undermines its importance. The paper recommends that more registration centers be created in both urban and rural areas while more stakeholders be involved and trained in vital records registration. It is also important that more publicity is made to create awareness on the significance of registering vital records.

Population census is a veritable tool for knowing the population, characteristics or indicators, structure and implications for social services such as education, health, housing, urbanization, migration, as well as economic development and planning. It is in this regard that population census is conducted every ten years in many countries though with its challenges of under or double counting, politicization and inadequate funding particularly in developing countries.

Like population census and any other source of demographic data, vital registration system consists of continuous registration of births, deaths, marriage and others (Kpedekpo and Arya, 1981). Vital registration is concerned with the recording of key life cycle or vital events. UN (2003) described vital events as live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriage, divorce, adoption, legitimating of birth, marriage or legal separation. In the same vein Salawu (2009) cited Umar (2003) and Maliki (2003) as defining vital registration as "the continuous and permanent collection, recording, collation, analysis, presentation and distribution of data on the occurrence and

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characteristics of vital events (such as births, deaths, still births, marriages and annulment of marriages, founding, migration and naturalization etc) done in accordance with legal requirements of a nation".

As a back up to population census, vital statistics has been found useful in determining population indicators. In Scandinavian countries, vital statistics replaces population census because it is a source of data which provides opportunity to get or secure data on continuous basis.

The process of updating census data in inter-censal years and the maintenance of an accurate and effective population register are dependent on the availability of vital statistics data realized from a functioning of vital registration.

Vital records are important to individuals and for the essential application of vital statistics data for a wide variety of official uses. The use of registration data for scientific purposes, application in the field of demography and public health is dependent on the information collected through the civil registration system. Thus, vital statistics derived from the aggregation of individual records provides experts with the *tools for* the demographic analyses needed for economic and social planning and development including rates and trends of population growth and distribution.

The registration of vital events, namely the recording of the facts associated with live births, deaths, foetal deaths, marriages, divorces and related occurrences is important enough to justify governmental requirements for a mandatory or compulsory vital registration. According to Salawu (2009), since such facts cannot be captured on continuous baste by a national census programe, the establishment of an orderly process for the creation of reliable records of vrtal events (simply referred to as vital registration system) is of great value both to government and to its citizens and even non-citizens.

The trend of vital statistics in Nigeria shows that it began from Lagos and its territories and later to other parts but for different purposes. According to the National Population Commission (2010), the first attempt at collecting data on births in Nigeria started in 1863 with the promulgation of the ordinance No. 12 at the Lagos though actual registration of these events started in 1892 and this was later expanded to villages bordering the colony including Warn in 1903 and Calabar in 1904. In 1917, a more comprehensive legislation on the registration of vital events through the country was introduced white the births, deaths and burial ordinance of 1948 consolidated the provisions of 1917 ordinance even though application was restricted mainly to the townships. Thus, there were various forms of birth and death registrations in many parts of the country during the colonial era even though there was no uniformity of operations, complete coverage and whole objectives were narrowed to the colonial needs for tax assessment and security operatives.

In 1979, the Federal Government promulgated the 'Births and deaths Compulsory Registration' Decree, Now Act 39 of 1979⁷ which provided for the establishment of a uniform system of vital registration nationwide. As a way of improvement, another decree was enacted in 1992 i.e. the Births, deaths, ETC (compulsory) Registration "Decree Now Act No. 69 of 1992 (National Population Commission, 2010). The law empowered the National Population Commission to register births, deaths, etc nationwide. Section 24 of the Third schedule of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic further reinforced the provisions of Act 69 of 1992.

Although the legislation on vital registrations has been in place but the implementation and responses by the public is another. Thus, the level of responses to the legislation since 19 years ago of coming into force worths investigating.

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in the study.

1. What is the level of live births registration coverage in Nigeria?
2. To what extent is live births registration coverage influenced by education location and gender?
3. What is the trend of deaths registration coverage by age, location and gender

Methodology

The study involved analysis of secondary data in that collecting primary data requires a huge amount, of money, time and personnel which the research does not have the resources to undertake. The National population commission has at least a vital registration office per local government in Nigeria. Vital registrations in local governments are coordinated y the population commission headquarters in each state and this is further collated at national quarter of the commission at Abuja. Thus, the source of data primary data supplied by parents and guidance to N PC at local government.

The processed data by National Population Commission from 1994 - 2007 on birth and death registration coverage. Frequency distribution and percentages were computed while bar charts were drawn to illustrate the data.

Results

Live births registration and influence of education are first presented followed by deaths registration and influence of education.

Question 1: What is the level of live births coverage in Nigeria?

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Table 1: Estimated Birth Registration Coverage By Year: 1994 - 2007

S/N	Year	Expected Birth	Registered Birth	Children not registered	% Coverage	% Not Covered
1	2000	4,436,638	936,590	3,500,048	21	79
2	2001	4,452,173	978,222	3,553,951	22	78
3	2002	4,629,782	935,496	3,694,286	20	80
4	2003	4,729,509	982,043	3,747,466	21	79
5	2004	4,831,401	686,929	4,144,472	14	86
6	2005	4,935,505	679,137	4,256,368	14	86
7	2006	5,049,578	927,472	4,122,106	18	82
8	2007	5,166,388	1,807,025	3,359,363	35	65

Source: National Population Commission 2010

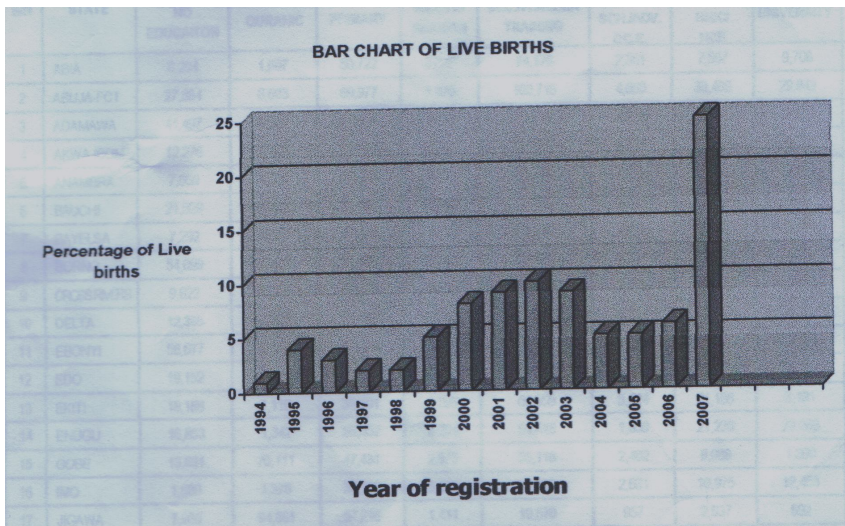
Data in Table 1 shows estimated birth registration coverage from the year 1994 -2007 which indicates expected birth, registered birth, children not registered, percentage coverage and percentage not covered.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of the Registered Live Births in Nigeria: 1994 - 2007.

Year of Registration	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Percentage Registered	0.01	4.13	3.59	1.81	1.76	6.42	8.73	9.31	8.73	9.04	6.53	6.59	9.42	23.93

Source: National Population commission, 2010

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of the Registered Live Births By Year of Registration: 1994-2007.



Data in table 2 shows a very slow rate of live births coverage and not until 1999 it gradually increased to 6.42% and later to 23.93% in 2007. Figure 1 also shows the percentage distribution of the registered live births pteoriattly. The gradual increase in coverage could be due to enlightenment campaign by the National Population Commission but such effort could be too stow.

Question 2: To what extent is live births coverage influenced by parents level of education?

Table 3: Total Registered Live From Births by Level of Education of Mother and States in Nigeria: 1994-2007

S/ N	STATE	LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF MOTHER								TOTAL
		NO EDUC/CAFTO N	QURANIC	PRIMARY	MIDDLE/ MODERN	SECJTEACHE R TRAMMG	HIGHER SCHIADV. <W,fc	POLYTEC HNIC/ MCE	UNIVERSIT Y	
1	ABIA	6,294	1,607	50,722	3,939	74,176	2,361	7,567	9,708	156,374
2	ABUJA-FCT	27,984	6,683	69,977	3,620	100,715	4,660	33,409	29,943	76,991
3	ADAMAWA	41,497	2,824	67,911	2,578	48,972	4,321	8,872	1,633	198,608
4	AKWA IBOM	12,276	2,135	117,475	7,201	100,916	4,958	16,942	15,755	277,658
5	ANAMBRA	7,059	4,228	105,954	8,409	171,640	4,629	25,421	22,067	349,407
6	BAUCHI	21,929	58,600	51,414	1,718	16,946	2,066	2,479	596	155,748
7	BAYELSA	7,292	617	17,543	1,342	22,277	838	2,152	2,719	54,780
8	BORNO	54,099	52,590	51,119	1,458	52,972	2,381	12,507	4,824	231,950
9	CROSSRNBRS	9,622	1,202	33,569	2,840	38,966	1,773	10,511	11,570	110,053

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10	DELTA	12,385	2,651	101,764	4,507	130,910	3,395	29,867	25,558	311,037
11	EBONYI	56,677	1,641	84,345	3,929	31,113	1,328	4,913	3,654	187,600
12	EDO	19,152	2,469	163,214	9,172	162,442	6,090	29,325	20,467	412,331
13	EKITI	18,188	1,116	38,301	8,596	60,559	3,434	21,166	8,181	159,541
14	ENUGU	16,853	1,342	95,352	3,294	94,816	1,850	21,236	23,068	257,811
15	GOBE	13,661	70,111	47,431	2,579	35,118	2,402	6,088	1,399	178,789
16	IMO	1,539	1,378	34,165	3,072	99,523	2,631	10,975	12,453	165,736
17	JIGAWA	7,986	94,861	57,216	1,411	19,570	957	2,537	592	185,130
18	KADUNA	21,298	51,733	71,481	4,311	59,878	4,262	14,904	3,511	231,378
19	KANO	10,119	287,674	155,684	4,801	97,821	5,231	14,704	5,205	581,239
20	KASINA	69,909	247,483	126,199	3,158	39,773	2,747	4,255	2,143	495,667
21	KEBBI	20,871	63,889	26,349	1,187	11,135	813	1,735	544	126,523
22	KOGI	52,243	5,470	118,191	1,581	70,019	3,642	24,955	5,188	281,289
23	KWARA	55,920	2,353	73,597	1,644	57,809	2,617	22,724	7,658	224,322
24	LAGOS	23,778	13,244	253,765	31,415	594,721	30,013	117,240	117,519	1,181,695
25	NASARAWA	25,813	10,025	33,278	832	21,184	861	5,670	1,167	98,830
26	NIGER	31,645	22,853	30,070	1,238	25,574	2,332	8,110	1,683	123,505
27	OGUN	22,284	1,828	96,722	6,471	117,759	3,918	36,820	18,963	304,765
28	ONDO	10,126	734	35,410	5,726	52,748	2,934	15,067	7,132	129,877
29	OSUN	86,654	3,477	208,054	20,673	233,437	5,596	59,721	16,278	633,890
30	OYO	96,132	5,862	243,484	24,964	216,826	6,684	73,869	33,855	701,686
31	PLATEAU	31,302	15,368	106,441	6,300	79,714	3,803	19,929	7,822	270,679
32	RIVERS	3,314	2,738	33,243	2,608	89,246	3,606	15,310	33,026	183,091
33	SOKOTO	5,394	96,157	20,209	785	6,845	516	1,198	664	131,768
34	TARABA	42,248	9,563	33,631	1,601	13,737	1,390	2,790	553	105,513
35	YOBE	31,314	41,937	28,759	657	23,469	1,682	4,461	1,126	133,405
36	ZAMFARA	2,045	51,247	18,790	1,191	7,326	714	1,330	452	83,095
	Total	976,902	1,259,690	2,900,839	190,808	3,080,652	133,435	690,759	458,676	9,691,761

Table 3 shows the total registered live births by level of education of mother and states overall, 9,936,221 live births were registered out of which the highest number 3,142,840 were from mothers with secondary/teacher training education category while the least 137,756 were from mother higher school/advanced G.C.E. category. At the state level, Lagos State recorded highest registration of live births (1,181,895) while Bayelsa State recorded the least live births (54,780). Level of awareness, cultural practices, accessibility to registration facility, mode of delivery could be responsible for level of live births registration.

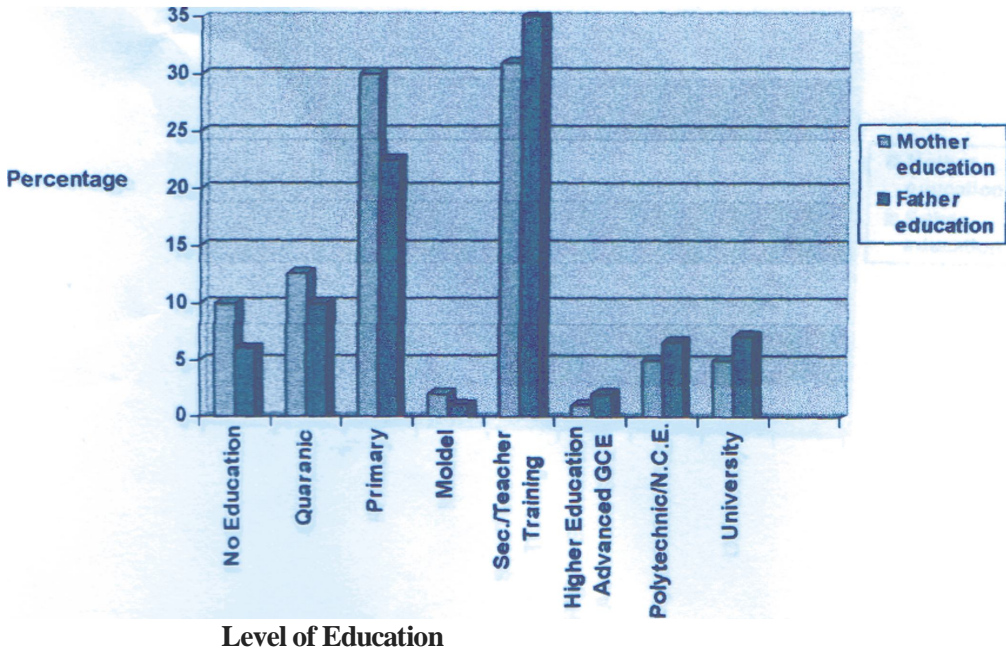
Table 4: Percentage Distribution of the Registered Live Births By Level of Education of Mother and Father (1994 - 2007).

		Level of Education							
Parent	No Education	Quaranic	Primary	Midlevel Modern	Sec/Teacher Training	Higher school/Advanced GCE	Polytechnic NCE	University	Total
Mother	10.71	13.27	29.39	1.96	31.28	1.39	7.23	4.75	100
Father	6.96	10.90	23.48	1.40	34.51	2.01	9.85	10.88	100

Source: National Population Commission (2010).

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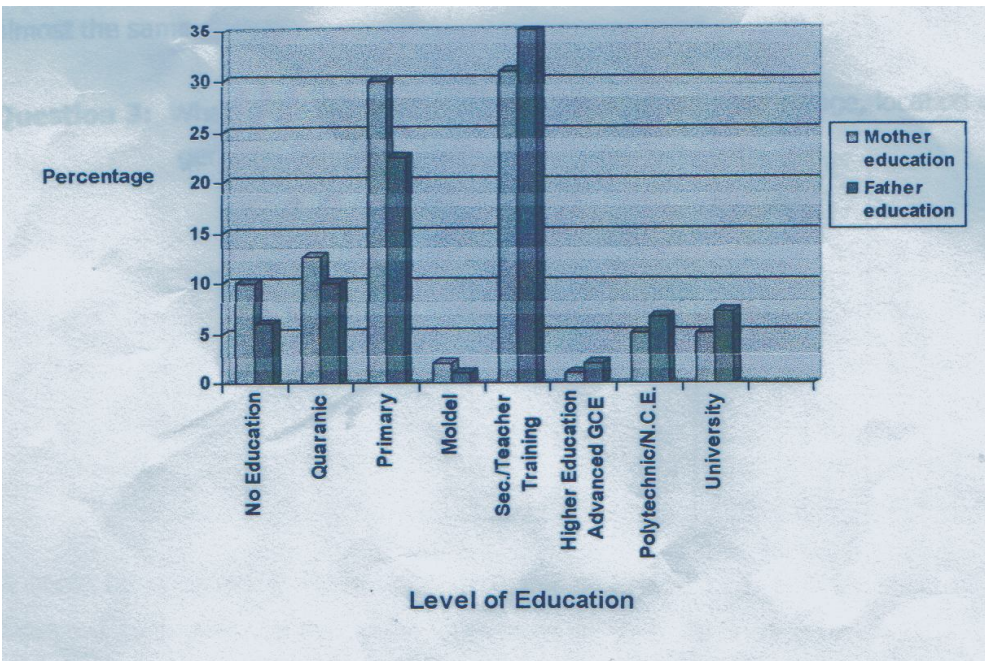


Table 4 shows that the highest percentage of 31.28 of live births registered were for mothers in the secondary / teacher training category and the lowest (1.39 percent) for mothers with higher/advanced GCE category. Similarly, the highest percentage of 34.51 of live births registered were for fathers in the secondary / teacher training category and lowest (1.40 percent) for fathers with middle/modern education category.

Figure 2 shows percentage distribution of the registered live births by level of education of mother and father. The registration was highest for both mother and father with secondary/teacher training but father's was relatively higher 34.51% than mother's 31.28%. This was followed by Primary education with mother's having higher percentage 29.39 than father 23.48%. Parents with Quaranic education registered more live births than illiterates, and those with higher qualifications.

Of the 9,936,221 livebirths registered within 14 years (1994-2007), 6,991,156 (70.04%) was recorded in urban areas white 2,945,066 (29.96%) was recorded in rural areas. This suggests that access to registration of live births is better in urban areas than in rural areas.

The national percentage distribution of live births registered by sex shows that 53.67% were mates and 46.33% were females white the proportion in the states is almost the same.

Question 3: What is the trend of deaths registration coverage by age, location and gender?

Table 5: Percent Distribution of the Registered Deaths by Age at Death and States From (1994-2007)

SIN	STATE	AGE GROUP AT REGISTRATION							TOTAL
		LESS THAN 1YR.	01-04	05-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
1	ABIA	1.06	1.09	0.87	2.15	22.76	33.52	38.54	100.00
2	ABUJA-FCT	1.26	3.29	3.42	1.84	44.29	26.92	15.98	100.00
3	ADAMAWA	2.21	11.30	6.65	7.61	41.16	18.59	12.49	100.00
4	AKWA IBOM	0.48	0.54	0.35	1.15	19.23	38.45	39.80	100.00
5	ANAMBRA	0.39	1.47	2.42	2.65	21.51	30.69	40.87	100.00
6	BAUCHI	2.69	17.78	4.14	4.59	23.94	28.63	18.23	100.00
7	BAYELSA	0.95	2.85	2.21	3.80	23.10	27.53	39.56	100.00
8	BENUE	1.28	1.21	1.40	4.20	41.26	35.06	15.59	100.00
9	BORNO	2.69	6.51	4.29	7.47	36.92	27.33	14.79	100.00
10	CROSS RIVERS	0.06	3.18	1.62	2.10	29.27	39.11	24.65	100.00
11	DELTA	2.83	4.59	1.73	3.15	19.45	33.05	35.21	100.00
12	EBONY!	0.57	2.39	1.61	3.11	32.35	40.07	19.91	100.00
13	EDO	0.88	0.63	1.57	5.22	27.16	31.74	32.81	100.00
14	EKITI	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.39	22.78	37.50	38.33	100.00
15	ENUGU	0.46	3.74	3.88	6.98	29.14	31.27	24.52	100.00
16	GOBE	1.79	1.30	0.49	1.79	34.31	42.11	18.21	100.00
17	IMO	1.34	2.91	1.14	3.84	26.56	28.40	35.82	100.00
18	JIGAWA	1.36	20.86	9.23	9.05	26.14	18.85	14.51	100.00

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19	KADUNA	4.04	7.02	7.99	10.22	35.20	21.88	13.67	100.00
20	KANO	1.15	21.19	9.43	7.93	23.25	20.00	17.06	100.00
21	KASINA	1.85	23.23	12.1	9.87	24.49	15.49	12.91	100.00
22	KEBBI	0.60	6.25	4.86	10.90	42.36	19.84	13.19	100.00
23	KOGI	0.28	1.75	2.32	3.74	34.34	29.35	28.21	100.00
24	KWARA	1.11	5.62	5.5	4.45	21.62	28.59	33.41	100.00
25	LAGOS	0.61	1.02	2.22	5.84	31.43	29.48	29.41	100.00
26	NASARAWA	1.54	2.31	3.08	6.92	36.15	36.15	13.85	100.00
27	NIGER	0.51	3.51	0.88	4.39	32.07	32.43	26.21	100.00
28	OGUN	0.45	0.38	3.44	1.41	18.72	34.00	41.60	100.00
29	ONDO	0.08	1.16	0.75	2.33	23.67	39.45	32.5	100.00
30	OSUN	0.39	1.04	0.70	2.33	17.57	33.16	44.80	100.00
31	OYO	1.85	1.61	1.31	3.41	25.96	30.14	35.73	100.00
32	PLATEAU	3.69	6.86	4.83	6.59	34.38	26.84	16.81	100.00
33	RIVERS	3.45	1.45	1.12	2.49	24.34	37.27	29.88	100.00
34	SOKOTO	1.99	18.93	9.43	14.03	30.55	11.84	13.23	100.00
35	TARABA	0.61	6.01	3.12	6.85	41.90	29.27	12.24	100.00
36	YOBE	0.85	5.92	5.23	7.90	29.95	31.56	18.58	100.00
37	ZAMFARA	0.98	12.47	10.1	12.84	34.60	16.75	12.22	100.00
	Total	1.36	6.77	4.43	5.67	28.09	27.78	25.90	100.00

It could be observed from the table that the registered birth falls far short of the expected birth Average Percentage Coverage in year 2000 to year 2003 was 21 which fell to 14 in 2005 and 2006 and later rose to 18 and later 35 in year 2006 and 2007 respectively.

Table 5 shows that overall, registration of deaths cuts across all ages but more at ages 25 -- 65 and above. Specifically, deaths record was highest in age 25 - 44 representing 28.09%, followed by 45 - 64 age cohort representing 27.78% and age 65+ representing 25.00% and least registration was in age group less than 1 year which represented 1.36% of the total registration. Osun State registered death of 65" group most (44.80%) while Zamfara State registered the age group least (12.22%). Thus, there is variation in states deaths registration of age groups.

Higher deaths were recorded in urban areas (69.48%) than in the rural areas where 30.52% was recorded.

Deaths registration also have gender dimension, 67.34% was recorded for males and 32.66% for females which indicates male deaths registration is more than twice higher than female. This national demographic trend is similar to that of the states and might be due to high vulnerability of males to high risk situations than females or perhaps preference is given to deaths registration of males than females.

Discussion of Results

Vital registration is important to both individuals and the nation and thus its level of coverage in Nigeria is discussed with particular reference to level of live births and influence of education, death registration and location. Live births registration between 1994 and 2007 was stow. Although there was gradual increase from 1999 to 2001 and this was not sustained as the rate declined until 2007 when it increased significantly.

Low awareness of the need for registration, insufficient availability of registration centers particularly in rural areas characterise vital registration in Nigeria. Two registration centers per local government are grossly inadequate for most local governments particularly thickly populated and rural areas where the population is widely scattered. Study by Salawu (2009) showed that the spatial coverage of vital registration is tow but more effective in urban areas, states and local government headquarters white the impact in rural areas is almost absent due to inaccessibility of rural settlements. Linked with poor publicity, and accessibility is low knowledge of the significance of vital registration and this is confirmed by study by Kwanye, Nyarko and Anarfj (2007) who reported that vital registration system had a poor performance in rural Ghana and that the law governing the system is not being enforced in rural areas in Ghana. In Nigeria, 70.04 percent of registered live births took place in urban areas as against 29.% percent in rural areas whereas more than 50 percent Nigerians live in rural areas. Data on distribution of the registered live births by place of occurrence showed maternity home, 33.33 percent; at home, 1.51 percent, in traditional doctors' place and 1.82 percent in other places. This indicates that one in every three live births takes place at home and such may not be registered.

Furthermore, in most of the Northern states, more than 50 percent of the births took place at home and this might be due to religion or level of rurality and such births might not be registered. There is also gender reflection in the distribution of the registered live births in 1994-2007 as 53.67 percent was for males against 46.33 percent for females. Perhaps parents preferred to register male children to female children. The study further examined the possible influence of parents level of education on registration of live births. Registration of live births took place across all categories of parents' level of education but was most significant with parents with secondary/teacher training education background. This finding possed a surprise as one would have expected that graduate parents and those with higher educational background register live births than other group of parents. Illiterate mothers registered more live births than graduate mothers and this suggests that mother's or even father' education is insignificant in registration of live births in Nigeria. In the same vein, parents with Quaranic education registered more live births than graduate or polytechnic / NCE or higher school/Advanced GCE holders. In effect, higher parents educational background has no positive impact on live births registration but moderate education like secondary/teacher training has better impact. To some extent, this agrees with Adedini and Odimegwu (2011) who found education to be very significant at

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increasing the knowledge of people and a very high proportion of respondents who were knowledgeable about vital registration system had at least secondary education. The Nigeria national literacy rate is 78.6% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) but does not reflect in registration of live births in Nigeria. Perhaps low level of awareness was more responsible for low registration of vital records than literacy.

In addition, the attitude of the staff registering vital statistics is not encouraging partly due to shortage of staff (1 staff covering all the health facilities or maternal and child hospitals in one local government) and poor attitude to work (lateness and absenteeism to work). The higher educated parents are able to keep the records of births or deaths privately in their homes and hence they have no need for registering such births or deaths.

On registration of deaths across ages, the study found that deaths are registered from age below one to 65 and above. However, registration of deaths was highest among age 25-44, followed by 45-64 and 65 and above while it was least in age below one. Although Lucas (2003) study suggested that it will be difficult to have a near accurate and complete vital registration system in Nigeria many years to come but the deaths registration cutting across all ages indicates that gradually better registration might be achieved if necessary policy is enforced and registration points are expanded. Having highest deaths registration among age 25-44 might indicate the need to use the registration for claims or exceptions or a pointer to low life expectancy. Demographics of Nigeria on life expectancy was estimated at 51.56 years in 2000 and fell to 46.94 years in 2009 (OA Factbook 2011). More deaths were registered in urban centres than rural areas while more male deaths were recorded than female. This gender trend is similar to national average which indicates females have relatively longer life expectancy than males. On the other hand, registration of more male deaths than female might imply preference for male deaths registration to females as the later is considered not relevant.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A comprehensive vital registration system in a nation building is of paramount importance. Thus updating of census data in inter-censal years or the maintenance of an accurate and effective population register is dependent upon the availability of vital statistics data (UN, 1998). Vital statistics derived from the aggregation of individual records provides the tools for the demographic analyses needed for economic, social planning and development, including rates and trends of population growth and distribution. In the light of this, the study examined national vital statistics records with a view to ascertain level of coverage of births and deaths registration and the extent to which level of education and location affect them. The study found that level of births and deaths registration is low and not positively influenced by high education of parents while location had impact on registration in favour of more taking place in urban than rural areas.

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations are made for improved coverage of live births and deaths registration in Nigeria. There is need for

wider publicity of registration of vital statistics. More registration centres should be created in each local government area to ease proximity for registration.

Furthermore, registration of vital statistics should be made compulsory nationwide as provided in the constitution. Government needs to make provision for adequate resources in terms of finance and personnel on the basis of regular budgetary allocation to enhance adequate coverage.

The National Population Commission should involve and train midwives, nurses, school teachers, burial/crematorium attendants and religious leaders on methods of registering vital statistics to enhance improved coverage.

Sustainable programme of public education, enlightenment and advocacy at all levels is sine-qua-non to improved vital registration coverage. Thus, governments should enhance public education, enlightenment and advocacy at community, local, state and national levels.

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