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An Assessment of High Children Population on Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of high children population on basic education in Nigeria. The study uses a quantitative research method. Data collection through secondary data that were obtained from print resources and online publications. Content analysis was adopted to analyze literatures. The findings showed that out of school children, shortage of school facilities, shortage of teachers, overcrowdness of classroom, poor quality of education and burden on the government's education expenditure are some of the impact of high population of children on basic education in Nigeria. Based on this finding, the paper hereby recommends that government at every levels should embark on massive public awereness sensitization on family planning to curtain high population in Nigeria. Government should collaborate with private institutions, religious institutions and traditional institutions on the sensitization on family planning and birth control programme. Government at every level should increase budgetary allocation to the basic education in Nigeria. This will aid provision of facilities, instructional resources and employment of professional teachers.

Keys words: Children population, Education, Impact

Introduction

The current projected mid-year population of Nigeria is put at 237,596,419 as of Thursday, July 10, 2025 based on Worldometer's elaboration of the latest United Nations data1. Based on the above, Nigeria population is equivalent to 2.89% of the total world population. Nigeria was ranked as the sixth in the list of countries (and dependencies) by population. The population density in Nigeria is 261 per Km² (675 people per mi²). The total land area is 910,770 Km² (351,650 sq. miles). Furthermore, 54.86% of the population is urban (130,312,056) people in 2025. The median age in Nigeria is 18.1 years (United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs - Population Division. World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision (Medium-fertility variant).

Nigeria has a young and rapidly growing population with a high proportion of children and adolescents. The country's population pyramid is characterized by a wide base and a narrow top, indicating high birth rates and a relatively short life expectancy. This age structure presents both opportunities and challenges for Nigeria's development. Nigeria has a young population, with a significant proportion under the age of 15. The median age is around 18.8 years, indicating a relatively young population. The population pyramid is broad at the base (younger ages) and narrows towards the top (older ages), reflecting high birth rates and a relatively young age structure.

In 2025, Nigeria is projected to have a very young population, with approximately 60% of its citizens estimated to be under the age of 25, according to Daily Trust. This translates to a median age of 18.1 years. This youthful demographic presents both opportunities and challenges for Nigeria as it strives for development especially in the educational sector.

Also, Population ages 0-14 (% of total population) in Nigeria was reported at 41.01 % in 2024, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognized sources. Nigeria - Population ages 0-14 (% of total) - actual values, historical data, forecasts and projections were sourced from the World Bank on July of 2025 (World-metere 2025). The age group 0-14 are supposed to be basic education school age. The age group 0-14 have been described as the age by which children are still in the basic schools (Basic1-9). It is important to assess the impact of high children population on basic education in Nigeria. It is based on this that this paper seeks to discuss the impact of impact of high children population on basic education in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Concept of Basic education

Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. For purposes of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE) with the following objectives: developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion; the provision of compulsory, free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age; reducing the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency; to cater through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling; and to ensure the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral, security and civic values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises 1 year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education (FRN, 2013). The goals of Basic Education are: to provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement; to develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities; to inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour; to inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socio-economic background; and to provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability (FRN, 2013).

2.2 Nigeria’s Population in perspective

The term population is defined as the total number of people or individuals living in a particular place, region or geographical area over a given period of time. For example, the population of Nigeria as 2006 census result is 140, 431, 790 people with males having 71, 345, 488 (representing 50.8%) and females 69, 086, 302 (representing 49.2%). The total number of households is 28,900,492. This situation made Nigeria to be the seventh most populous country in the world (After China, India, United States of America, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, then Nigeria) and the largest in the Sub-Saharan African regions. Today, Nigeria is the sixth most populous contry in the world (Worldometers, 2025). The population of Nigeria has more than double since her nationhood independence in 1960. Reference from the data of the past censuses, the Nigerian population increased sharply from 30.4 million people in 1953; 55.7

million in 1963; 89 million in 1991 census (FRN, 2004). The last population census and housing survey of 2006 shows that Nigeria has a population of over 140 million people while her annual growths is 3.02% and today, the mid-year population as projected is 237,596,419 (Worldometers, 2025). Based on the above, Nigeria population is equivalent to 2.89% of the total world population. Nigeria was ranked as the sixth in the list of countries with high dependency ratio.

Nigeria has a young population compared to more advanced countries whereby more than two in every five Nigerians are below 15 years of age and will enter into a child bearing ages (NPC, 2010). At present the number of women in the child bearing ages (reproductive age) group is about 45 million. The implication of this high young population bracket is that, Nigeria's dependency ratio is much higher and of course; high dependency ratio's affects family and society in several ways including incidence of more children per adult to provide with food, clothing, education, housing, healthcare etc. the paradox lies with the ability of the government to provide basic education to this high young population in terms of accessibility, affordability, qualitative and competitive education driven by science and technology.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Malthusian theory of population was adopted in this study. Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman who made dire predictions about earth's ability to sustain its growing population. According to Malthusian theory, three factors would control human population that exceeded the earth's carrying capacity, or how many people can live in a given area considering the number of available resources. Malthus identified these factors as war, famine, and disease (Malthus 1798). He termed them "positive checks" because they increase mortality rates, thus keeping the population in check. They are countered by "preventive checks," which also control the population but by reducing fertility rates; preventive checks include birth control and celibacy. Thinking practically, Malthus saw that people could produce only so much food in a given year, yet the population was increasing at an exponential rate. Eventually, he thought people would run out of food and begin to starve. They would go to war over increasingly scarce resources and reduce the population to a manageable level, and then the cycle would begin anew. Today, the reality of Malthusian theory is unambiguous in the Nigerian context with a population of over 237 million people and dilapidated school structures, poor funding of basic education leading to high out of school children, shortage, unqualified and inadequate teachers across all layers of basic education and above all overcrowded classrooms leading to poor quality education. Therefore, population control measures must be put in place to checkmate this high young population in Nigeria. Government must as a matter urgency focus on basic education and skills acquisition for this booming young population to empower this explosive population in Nigeria.

3.0 Method

Exploring the impact of high children population on the Nigerian basic education is a position paper that adopted a systematic literature review-based method. The method allows to collect and review the related previous literature from various online sources. With the aid of digital platform, the researcher collected secondary information to generate knowledge on this topic from 2015-2025. The position paper followed qualitative narrative design method. The researcher has visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze the literatures on impact of high children population on the Nigerian basic education. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes as on impact of high children population on the Nigerian basic education (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

4.0 Result and Discussion

There are many impact of high children population on the Nigerian basic education. Some of the impact include; out of school children, shortage of school facilities, shortage of teachers, overcrowdness of classroom, poor quality of education and shortage of instructional resources.

Out of school children

The high children population in Nigeria is responsible for the high out of schools children in Nigeria. In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which outlines a blueprint to address global challenges across a broad range of themes including poverty, health, education, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, otherwise referred to as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Unfortunately, an approximated 263 million children remain out of school around the world. This number includes children who never started formal schooling and children who started school but later dropped out (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016 in Oyekan, Ayorinde, & Adenuga, 2023).

Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world (UNICEF, 2018). It is estimated that one in every five out-of-school children around the globe is in Nigeria. Even though basic education is legally free and compulsory in the country, about 10.5 million children aged 5 to 14 years are out of school. About 50 percent of these children live in the northern region, known to be severely affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. In addition, only 61 percent of children between the ages of 6 to 11 years attend primary school regularly (UNICEF, 2018 in Oyekan, et al, 2023)…..noted that the high fertility in Nigeria is a major factor responsible for this social and educational programme. … Additionally, the high population of children also leads to an increase in dropout rates, as families may be unable to afford to send all their children to school or may prioritize sending boys over girls. This further hinders the overall education system and perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Shortage of school facilities

Children high population in Nigeria has affected school facilities provision. Infrastructural facilities according to Ogunode (2020) are those facilities aiding the delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, road facilities, water, electricity, internet etc.. Lawinsider (2020) viewed infrastructure facilities to mean any works, structures or improvements to land or waters other than Ancillary Project Area Infrastructure which directly or indirectly provide a service or any other benefit to:- (a) the general public; or (b) the Island community, including – (c) offices, depots and staff housing by or for the benefit of the Commonwealth of Australia, the State, any local government, statutory authority or government owned corporation,(d) any electricity generation, distribution or transmission facility; (e) public education facilities; (f) public health facilities; (g) police facilities; (h) emergency facilities; (i) transport facilities (including pedestrian paths, cycle ways, transfer facilities, freight storage and logistic areas, bus stops and layovers, ferry stops, taxi stops); (j) sewage pump stations and sewerage treatments facilities; (k) solid waste transfer and treatment facilities; (l) water supply pump stations, raw water storage, clear water storage, dams, weirs, bore field infrastructure; (m) the things listed in section 24KA(2) of the Native Title Act to the extent that they are not Ancillary Project Area Infrastructure; and (n) any IBIS Store; but not including – (o) Social Housing. The enrolment of more children that surpasses the capacity of the basics schools have resulted in shortage of school facilities and damages ( ). Another effect of a high children population on basic education in Nigeria is the lack of infrastructure and facilities. Schools in rural areas often lack proper buildings, electricity, and sanitation, making it difficult for children to learn in a conducive environment. This can also lead to health and safety issues for students and teachers (Abubakar, 2020).

Shortage of teachers

Another negative impact of high children population in Nigeria is the shortage of professional teachers. The high rate of enrolment in the Universal Basic schools in Nigeria have led to shortage of professional teachers. The Nigerian Basic education is faced with the problem of shortage of professional teachers. According to the 2018 National Personnel Audit (NPA), conducted by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).The report disclosed that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early

Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary Schools across the nation (Independent newspaper, 2019). This directly affects the quality of basic education provision in Nigeria. Moreover, a high children population also leads to a shortage of qualified teachers. With a large number of students to be taught, there is a high demand for teachers, but a shortage of qualified individuals to fill these positions. This further affects the quality of education being provided and can hinder the intellectual development of children.

Overcrowdness of classroom

The high population of children in Nigeria can be linked to the problem of overcrowded classrooms which is not good for foundation education like the basic education in Nigeria. Ogwo (2024) described the teacher-student ratio in Nigeria as disturbing. "The case is alarming because thof the high population of children enrolled in the schools. The Basic Education Commission in 2018 revealed that the pupil-teacher ratios in Nigeria exceeded 80 pupils per teacher. This contrasts with UNESCO's recommended ratio of 35 pupils to one teacher. Both United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) maintain that the pupil-teacher ratio provides a good headcount benchmark for quality education Ogundele said that Nigerian teachers are made to handle over 100 students in a class and that even some private schools are also guilty of inappropriate teacher-student ratio per class. Similarly, Abiola Omosebi, a teacher, said the situation is worrisome because in many schools there are about 55 to one teacher minimum, and 116 to 120 students per teacher, especially in public schools. Omosebi said that the consequences of such overcrowding are significant, such that teachers focus mostly on high-performing students (Reported by Ogwo, 2024). ……, attributed the overcrowded classrooms in public schools partly to high fertility rate in Nigeria. High children population puts a strain on the educational system, as there are not enough resources and facilities to accommodate the growing number of students. This leads to overcrowded classrooms, limited access to textbooks and learning materials, and a decrease in the quality of education being provided (Abubakar, 2020).

Poor quality of education

The high children population also results in a high student-teacher ratio, making it challenging for teachers to effectively teach and engage with each student. This can lead to a decrease in the quality of education and a lack of personalized learning for students. The high children population in Nigeria has greatly impacted the basic education system in the country. With a large number of children, there is a strain on resources such as schools, teachers, and materials. This leads to overcrowded classrooms, limited access to quality education, and a lack of individual attention for students which directly affects education quality in the schools (Bello, 2022)..

Burden on the government's education expenditure

Moreover, the increase in children population also puts a burden on the government to provide adequate funding and resources for the education system. With limited resources, the government may struggle to provide quality education for all children, especially those in remote and underprivileged areas. Additionally, the high population also puts a strain on the economic resources of Federal, state and local government, making it difficult for them to afford education for their children population (Bello, 2022). The high children population puts a financial burden on government especially developing countries like Nigeria. Many developing countries struggle to provide adequate funds to education, and provision of uniforms, and other necessary expenses, resulting in children being unable to attend school or dropping out. This has a direct impact on the literacy rate and overall level of education in the country (Abubakar, 2020).

4.1 Findings

The paper revealed that out of school children, shortage of school facilities, shortage of teachers, overcrowdness of classroom, poor quality of education and burden on the government's education expenditure are some of the impact of high population of children on basic education in Nigeria.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the impact of high children population on basic education in Nigeria is significant and requires immediate attention. It not only affects the quality of education but also has long-term consequences on the development of the country such as; out of school children, shortage of school facilities, shortage of teachers, overcrowdness of classroom, poor quality of education and burden on the government's education expenditure**.** Addressing the issue of high children population is crucial in improving the basic education system and ensuring equal access to quality education for all children in Nigeria. Based on this finding, the paper hereby recommends that:

1. Government at every levels should embark on massive public awereness sensitization on family planning to curtain high population in Nigeria.
2. Government should collaborate with private institutions, religious institutions and traditional institutions on the sensitization on family planning and birth control programme.
3. Government at every level should increase budgetary allocation to the basic education in Nigeria and in addition to this create skills acquisition centres where the children can learned both basic education and skills. This will aid provision of facilities, instructional resources, manpower and employment of professional teachers.

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