



Covenant University

**16<sup>th</sup>** INAUGURAL LECTURE

**“BE FRUITFUL, MULTIPLY AND  
REPLENISH THE EARTH”:**

**THE MOTIVATION, THE COSTS AND THE GAINS**

**PATRICK A. EDEWOR**

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*“Be Fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth”:* The motivation, the costs and the gains



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**PREAMBLE**

It gives me great pleasure to stand before this august audience of intellectuals to present my inaugural lecture today. This inaugural lecture which is the 16<sup>th</sup> in Covenant University is the first in the Department of Sociology and the third in the College of Business and Social Sciences. I consider it a great privilege to be the first Covenant University Professor of Sociology as well as the first and only male professor in my village (i.e. Aviara, in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria). My village has two other professors both of whom are females and are married to men from other towns. I give all the glory to God who made me what I am and also made this day possible.

When the founding fathers of Covenant University conceived its vision as that of “raising a new generation of leaders in all fields of human endeavour who shall redeem the battered image of the black race and restore the dignity of the black people”, especially those of Africa, they actually had it in mind to raise an army of solution providers to the myriads of societal problems in Nigeria, in particular, and Africa in general. It will interest you to note that this vision is similar to the vision of the founding fathers of sociology whose writings contributed to the development of sociology as a discipline. For example, when the French man, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), coined the word “sociology” (the science of society) in 1838, he intended to develop a discipline that

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would adopt the same kind of methods used by natural scientists in studying the numerous social problems that confronted the French society of his time, with the aim of providing solutions to those problems (Ogundipe & Edewor, 2012). The writings of other philosophers and scholars including Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) also contributed to the development of sociology as a discipline. Most of these founding fathers intended sociology to be a scientific discipline, which was why Auguste Comte who gave the discipline its name originally called it “Social Physics”.

There is, however, a debate as to whether sociology is actually a science. If, as Giddens (1997) puts it, “science is the use of systematic methods of empirical investigation, analysis of data, theoretical thinking and logical assessment of argument to develop a body of knowledge about a particular subject matter”, then sociology is a science. This is because everything that constitutes science as we see in this definition is found in sociology. However, studying social behaviour, as distinct from studying events in nature, faces certain challenges which do not exist in the natural sciences. The challenges emanate from the sociologist's very subject of inquiry – fellow humans. Unlike the objects in nature, humans are self-aware beings that confer sense and purpose to whatever they do. They have emotions, feelings and they reason. Their actions are meaningful to them and they do

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not simply respond to external stimuli as the objects in nature (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Consequently, both the positivist and phenomenological approaches are adopted as methods of sociological inquiry. While positivism favours quantitative research techniques, phenomenology embraces seeking to understand the meanings of social actions using interpretive qualitative techniques. Yet, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (triangulation) would provide a better understanding of social reality.

Sociology as a discipline is the systematic study of human social life, groups, social institutions and societies. It is a discipline that studies human behaviour, the patterns of interaction and relations in a social context. It gives us an understanding of how society is organized and how its members experience life. Sociologists focus on diverse areas including sociology of the family, sociology of education, sociology of religion, sociology of economic life, political sociology, sociology of development, population studies, industrial sociology, criminology, sociology of law, medical sociology, sociology of mass communication, rural sociology, urban sociology, gender studies, to mention but a few.

My specialization which is population studies focuses on the determinants and consequences of population change. Population change or population dynamics occurs as a result of the interplay of three major components: births (fertility), deaths

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(mortality) and territorial movements (migration). Formal Demography and Population Studies are closely related. Whereas formal demography is concerned with the statistical manipulation of data relating to purely demographic variables, such as births, deaths and migration, together with the refinement of analytical techniques to measure these events, population studies is a wider field which includes the study of fertility, mortality and migration in their wider social, cultural, economic and behavioural context using quantitative methods. Most formal demographers are mathematicians or statisticians who deal with demographic variables in a mathematical way. On the other hand, population studies approach considers the relationship between demographic and non-demographic variables. It is interested in the effect of a non-demographic variable, for example, how changes in income or education can affect fertility or mortality, or vice versa.

The focus of my research in the last three decades has been on fertility with a special focus on the value parents place on children and how this affects their reproductive behaviour. That is why this inaugural lecture is entitled: **“Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Replenish the Earth”**: The Motivation, the Costs and the Gains. In this lecture, we shall first interrogate this theme at a more general, global level before narrowing it down to Africa and Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, the world's population stood at 7,632,819,325 as at 12am on July 1, 2018. At that same time and date, Africa's population was 1,287,920,518 while that of Nigeria was 195,875,237 ([www.worldometers.info/world-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/)). Since the time the mandate was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to “be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28), the world's population has grown from just two to its present size. Initially, human population grew slowly. Although population estimates of early historical periods were imprecise, there are suggestions that at the dawn of agriculture (i.e. about 8,000 B.C.) the population of the world was approximately 5 million. This grew to 200 million in 1 A.D. (over 8,000 year period). The industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought about a tremendous change in the world's population. Whereas it took all of human history until about 1800, for the world population to reach 1 billion, the second billion was reached in only 130 years (in 1930), the third billion in 30 years (1960), the fourth billion in 15 years (July 20, 1974), the fifth billion in 13 years (July 11, 1987), the sixth billion in only 12 years (October 12, 1999) and the seventh billion in another 12 years (October 31, 2011) and currently (September, 2018), the world's population is over 7.6 billion. The world population doubled in 40 years (from 3 billion in 1959 to 6 billion in 1999). It is estimated that the world

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population will be over 8.5 billion in 2030 and over 9.7 billion by the year 2050. It is also estimated that the world population would hit the 8 billion mark in 2023 and 10 billion in 2055. It has been estimated as well that about 106 billion people have been born since the dawn of human species. This implies that the population currently alive is about 13.9% of all the people that have ever lived on earth. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of how the world population has grown since 1050 and what the size of the population is likely to be by 2050. It is important to note that while the world's population has grown phenomenally, the size of planet earth remains fixed and its resources also remain finite.

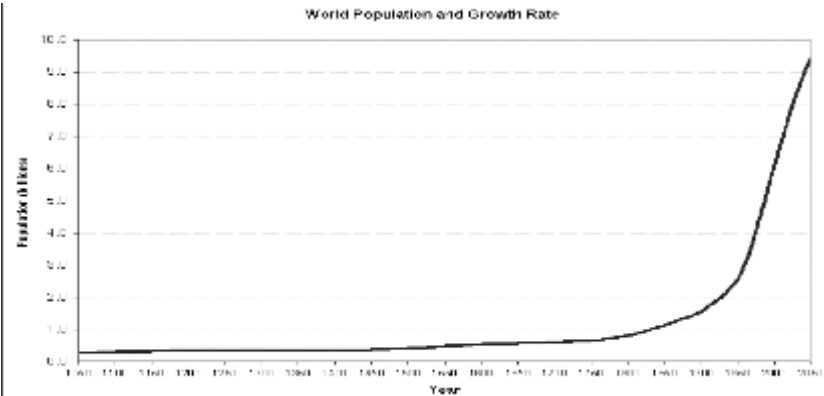


Figure 1: Graph Showing World Population Growth from 1050 to 2050

Source: <https://www.zmescience.com/science/unsustainable-human-population-growth-0534/>

Table 1 shows the world population by region as at 2018. It also shows the annual population growth rate, density per square kilometre, land area (in square kilometres), total fertility rate, percent of population that is urban as well as each region's share of

world population. As can be seen in the Table, Asia has the largest share of world population (59.5%). This is followed by Africa (16.9%), Europe (9.7%), Latin America and the Caribbean (8.5%), North America (4.8%) while Oceania has the smallest share (0.5%).

**Table 1: World Population by Region (2018)**

Region	Population (2018)	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Density (P/Km <sup>2</sup> )	Land Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	Total Fertility Rate	Urban Population (%)	World Share (%)
Asia	4,545,133,094	0.9	146	31,033,131	2.2	49.6	59.5
Africa	1,287,920,518	2.52	43	29,648,481	4.7	40.6	16.9
Europe	742,648,010	0.08	34	22,134,900	1.6	74.3	9.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	652,012,001	0.99	32	20,139,378	2.1	80.2	8.5
North America	363,844,490	0.73	20	18,651,660	1.9	83.5	4.8
Oceania	41,261,212	1.4	5	8,486,460	2.4	70.3	0.5

Source: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

The Table also shows that Africa has the highest Total Fertility Rate of all the regions of the world. The Total Fertility Rate in Africa, which is 4.7, is two times that of Asia and Oceania and three times that of Europe. Africa also has the highest annual population growth rate. Whereas all other regions (except Oceania) have annual population growth rates of less than 1%, Africa has an annual population growth rate of 2.52%. If the

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present population growth rate continues, Africa's population would double in less than 28 years.

Table 2 presents the top 10 countries with the largest populations as at July, 2018. The Table shows the population of each of the countries, the annual population growth rate, the population density per square kilometre, the land area (in square kilometres), total fertility rate, percent of the urban population and each of the countries' share of world population. As the Table shows, Nigeria, the most populous African country ranks the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world. It has a Total Fertility Rate of 5.7 (far higher than that of the other nine countries), and an annual population growth rate of 2.61% (again, far higher than that of the other nine most populous countries). With this annual growth rate, the implication is that the population of the country would double in the next 27 years. This means that by the year 2045, Nigeria's population will be 391,750,474.

**Table 2: Top 10 Countries with the Largest Populations (2018)**

S/N	Country	Population (2018)	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Density (P/Km <sup>2</sup> )	Land Area (Km <sup>2</sup> )	Total Fertility Rate	Urban Population (%)	World Share (%)
1	China	1,415,045,928	0.39	151	9,388,211	1.6	59.3	18.5
2	India	1,354,051,854	1.11	455	2,973,190	2.4	33.2	17.7
3	U.S.	326,766,748	0.71	36	9,147,420	1.9	83.7	4.3
4	Indonesia	266,794,980	1.06	147	1,811,570	2.5	55.3	3.5
5	Brazil	210,867,954	0.75	25	8,358,140	1.8	85.3	2.8
6	Pakistan	200,813,818	1.93	260	770,880	3.7	39.5	2.6
7	Nigeria	195,875,237	2.61	215	910,770	5.7	51	2.6
8	Bangladesh	166,368,149	1.03	1,278	130,170	2.2	36.5	2.2
9	Russia	143,964,709	-0.02	9	16,376,870	1.7	72.8	1.9
10	Mexico	130,759,074	1.24	67	1,943,950	2.3	79.2	1.7

Source: [www.worldometers.info/world-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/)

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, the question is: how will this population be sustained? Where shall we get food to feed all the people? In which houses will they live? Which schools will the children attend? Unemployment rate is already too high. Many of our cities are already overcrowded. Data by Population Reference Bureau (PRB, 2018) show that Nigeria is the second country with the fastest growing population, after India and it has been projected that by 2050 it would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> most populous country in the world with a population of 411 million, coming after India and China (PRB, 2017) (Table 3). At present, Nigeria constitutes 2.6 percent of world population, about 15.3 percent of Africa's

population, 18.3 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa and 51 percent of the population of West Africa (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2010).

**Table 3: World Population Outlook by 2050 (10 Most Populous Countries)**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Population (in millions)</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	India	1,676
2 <sup>nd</sup>	China	1,343
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>411</b>
4 <sup>th</sup>	U.S.	397
5 <sup>th</sup>	Indonesia	322
6 <sup>th</sup>	Pakistan	311
7 <sup>th</sup>	Brazil	231
8 <sup>th</sup>	Congo	216
9 <sup>th</sup>	Bangladesh	202
10 <sup>th</sup>	Ethiopia	191

Source: Population Reference Bureau (2017)

Table 4 presents Nigeria's population in historical perspective. It shows how the country's population has grown in the last six decades, from 1955-2018. The country's population which was about 41.1 million in 1955 has increased almost five-fold in the 63-year period to almost 196 million in 2018. The annual growth rate of the population which was 1.65 percent in 1955 rose to 1.90 percent in 1960, 2.51 percent in 1975 and 3.00 percent in 1980. It has remained well above 2.5 percent since 1985.

**Table 4: Nigeria's Population (1955-2018)**

Year	Population	Annual Growth Rate(%)	Total Fertility Rate	Density (P/Km <sup>2</sup> )	Urban Population (%)	Share of World Population (%)	Global Rank
1955	41,085,563	1.65	6.35	45	11.1	1.48	13
1960	45,137,812	1.90	6.35	50	15.4	1.49	13
1965	50,127,214	2.12	6.35	55	16.6	1.50	13
1970	55,981,400	2.23	6.35	61	17.8	1.51	11
1975	63,373,572	2.51	6.61	70	19.8	1.55	11
1980	73,460,724	3.00	6.76	81	22.0	1.65	11
1985	83,613,300	2.62	6.76	92	25.7	1.72	10
1990	95,269,988	2.64	6.60	105	29.8	1.79	10
1995	108,011,465	2.54	6.37	119	32.3	1.88	10
2000	122,352,009	2.52	6.17	134	35.0	1.99	10
2005	138,939,478	2.58	6.05	153	39.3	2.12	9
2010	158,578,261	2.68	5.91	174	43.8	2.28	7
2015	181,181,744	2.70	5.74	199	48.4	2.45	7
2018	195,875,237	2.61	5.67	215	48.9	2.57	7

Source: [www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/)

Total fertility rate has only declined marginally since 1985 (6.76 to 5.67 in 2018). Of course, population density has steadily increased from 45 persons per square kilometre in 1955 to 215 persons per square kilometre in 2018. Also, urban population which was just 11.1 percent in 1955 has increased to about 50 percent in 2018. The country's share of world population which was only 1.48 percent in 1955 has increased to about 2.6 percent in 2018. Nigeria now ranks 7<sup>th</sup> position globally as against 13<sup>th</sup> position in 1955.

Whether a country's population increases, declines or remains stationary, each of these has implications for socio-economic development. There is, however, no consensus



regarding the nature of the relationship between population and development. The different schools of thought on the nature of this relationship constitute what is generally referred to as the population-development debate. Let us briefly examine this debate to give us a clearer picture of the issues involved.

### **POPULATION-DEVELOPMENT DEBATE**

Three schools of thought have been involved in the population-development debate. The first which is championed by a British agricultural economist, Colin Clark, argues that **population growth stimulates development**. The proponents of this school of thought are of the view that population growth in many third world countries is desirable and, in fact, will stimulate rapid development because the population growth will make the labour required for the development of the natural resources of these countries or regions available. The stance of this school of thought is predicated on the assumption that many third world countries are under-populated in relation to the potential wealth of their natural resources.

The second school of thought argues that **population growth is not related to development**. This school of thought which is derived from Marx and Engels ideas argues that what hampers development is the exploitation of the poor (the proletariat) by the rich (the bourgeoisies) in a capitalist society

and not population growth. It is argued that population problems will disappear if social inequality is eliminated from society since, according to them, every member of society is born with the means to provide his/her subsistence. However, development which should normally benefit every member of society becomes impossible under an exploitative capitalist system because workers are deprived of the full share of their earnings by capitalists who take large profits.

On the other hand, the third school of thought holds that **population growth is detrimental to development**. The proponents of this school of thought include Thomas Malthus and contemporary scholars who have come to be identified as Neo-Malthusians. Prominent among them are Lester Brown and Paul Ehrlich. They are of the view that even if the economy is growing quite rapidly, that growth will not be reflected in the development of that society because the rapid growth rate of the population wipes off the effect of the growth in the economy unless the population is growing much more slowly than the growth in the economy. The situation is worse in a society in which the economy is growing quite slowly while the population is growing quite rapidly as is the case in most African countries. It is argued that the principal cause of poverty, low standard of living, ill-health, malnutrition and environmental degradation is rapid population growth.

Thomas Malthus was the first to draw attention to the

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challenges of rapid population growth in his seminal work entitled, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798. He noted that while population grew at a geometrical proportion (i.e. 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, etc.), the means of sustenance (food) grew at an arithmetic proportion (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, etc.) and that we cannot allow population to continue to grow at such a rate in a world in which resources are finite. The Malthusian theory posits that if population is not checked, it will be forced to check itself through what Malthus referred to as positive checks such as outbreak of disease, famine and wars. Even though Malthus did not advocate the use of modern contraceptives (since he was a religious monk), he recommended some prudential considerations including delayed marriages and self-restraints such as having no concubines. He was, therefore, the first person to call for deliberate attempts at stemming the rate of population growth. Even though the Malthusian theory was criticized, it draws attention to the dangers of a rapidly growing population.

Arising from the Malthusian theory is the concept of **optimum population**. Simply defined, the optimum population of a country is the right size of population that guarantees the maximum welfare of the members of that society, given its resources. It is the ideal or best size of population that will maximally utilize the resources of that country. When a country's population is at the optimum level, the population adequately and

maximally taps the resources of the country thereby yielding maximum output and, consequently, there is high standard of living. A population problem arises when the size of the population is below or above the optimum level. When a country's population is below the optimum level, the country is said to be under-populated. The size of the population is inadequate to effectively and maximally utilize the country's resources. As such, there is no maximum output since the country's resources are not maximally tapped. Thus, the country suffers in the midst of plenty. Conversely, when a country's population is above the optimum level, the country is said to be over-populated. Under the condition of over-population, the size of the population is beyond what the resources of the country can carry. As such, output is low. Some of the features of an over-populated society include: overcrowding, high rate of unemployment, the development of slums and high rate of crime.

While an optimum population is an ideal type towards which every society should strive, it is uncertain whether it is actually attainable. We do not know of any country in the world that has ever attained it in the past, and it is doubtful whether any country will be able to attain it in the future. This is owing to the fact that it is not clear whether, resources in this case refer to only the resources that have been discovered or all the potential resources in a country because there may be some resources that

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are yet to be discovered; their discovery depends on the level of technological advancement. Therefore, it is possible for a country once described as over-populated to revert back to the condition of under-population when new resources are discovered. Let us at this point consider the effect of development on population growth and size.

### **EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT ON POPULATION**

The conventional wisdom that has tried to explicate the effect of development on population growth and size is the **demographic transition theory**. This theory which was originally put forward in 1929 by Warren Thompson was later developed in 1945 by Frank Notestein (Notestein, 1945). It is essentially the interpretation of the demographic histories of western industrialized societies as they experienced industrialization as well as economic and technological advancement. It identifies three main stages in the demographic histories of these countries. The first stage which is the pre-transitional stage was characterized by high birth rates and high death rates. Death rates, though somewhat fluctuating, equated the high birth rates and consequently, population was stationary and also low. This was the pre-industrial period in which the societies were mainly agrarian. Economic and technological advancement coupled with industrialization and urbanization ushered in the second stage

which is the transitional stage. The economic and technological advancement with the concomitant improvement in health services and better nutrition resulted in a sharp decline in death rates, especially a decline in infant and child mortality, while birth rates remained high. The persistently high birth rates resulted in high and rapid population growth rate. As economic and technological development continued, birth rates eventually took a downward trend. This was the latter part of the transitional stage. At this stage, population growth became less rapid than it was at the early part of the transitional stage. Finally, there is the third stage which is the post-transitional stage (industrial stage) in which both births and deaths became equated, albeit at a much lower level than it was in the pre-transitional stage and again at which population became stationary although much larger than it was at the pre-transitional stage (Figure 2).

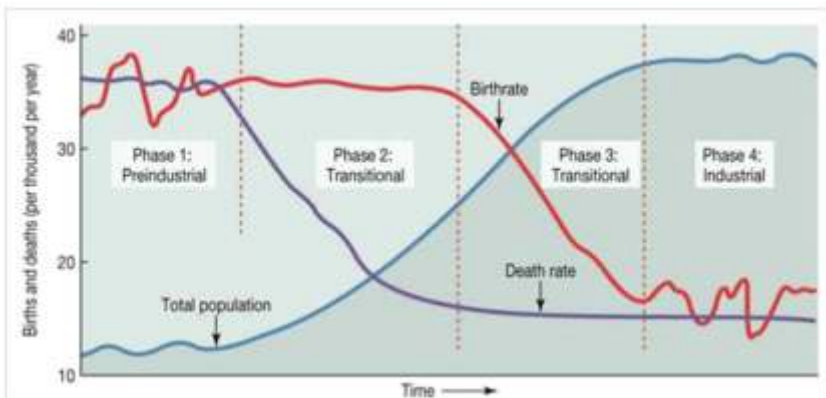


Figure 2: Demographic Transition Model (Classical Model or English Type)

The demographic transition theory has been criticized on a number of grounds. One major criticism of the theory is the wrong assumption that this classical model of the demographic transition will be replicated in all countries of the world. There have actually been three types of demographic transition: the English type which corresponds with the classical model as explicated above, the French type in which both birth and death rates declined simultaneously resulting in moderate increases in population size (Figure 3) as well as the Mexican type which is a prototype of the kind of situation that obtains in Africa (Figure 4). In this type, death rates declined appreciably while birth rates remain persistently high or even increase slightly. The result is population explosion. This explains the rapid population growth rates of most African countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa.

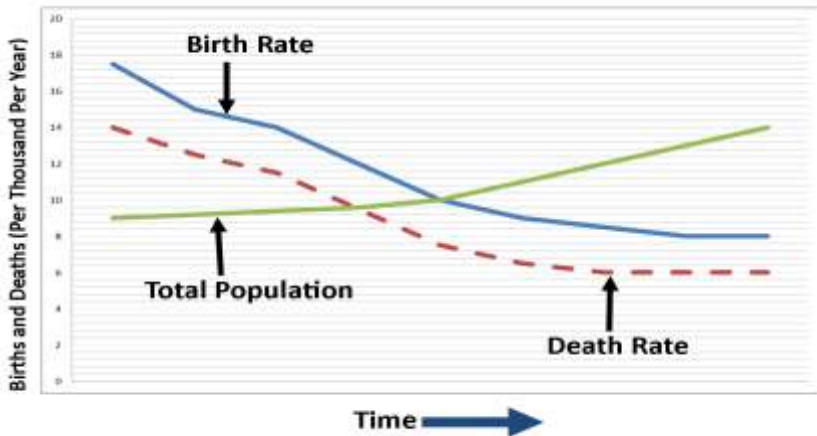


Figure 3: The French Type of Demographic Transition

There is no consensus on what should be done in order to stem the rapid rate of population growth in the less developed countries of the world. However, the issue seems to centre around fertility because there cannot be a deliberate attempt to increase mortality in a bid to reduce population growth rate. There is an ever growing desire to reduce mortality to very low levels. Given the persistently high fertility, the implication of this is that population growth is bound to accelerate in these countries with the attendant consequences for socio-economic development.

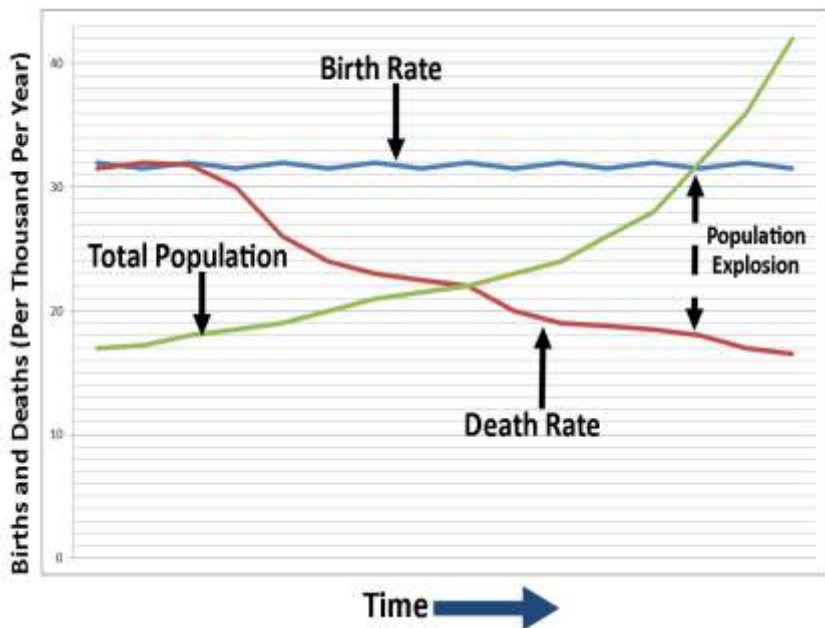


Figure 4: The Mexican Type of Demographic Transition



## **INTERGENERATIONAL WEALTH FLOWS**

The idea of intergenerational wealth flows is associated with an Australian population scientist, John C. Caldwell, who attempted to reformulate the demographic transition theory because, according to him, it did not sufficiently provide an explanation for the levels and trends in fertility and mortality. He contends that there are only two kinds of society. The first is one in which it is economically rational to have unlimited number of children while the second is one in which it is economically rational to have a limited number of children. He notes that the fundamental issue in the demographic transition is the direction and magnitude of intergenerational wealth flows or the net balance of the two flows. When net intergenerational wealth flows is in favour of parents, high fertility is economically rational and children are considered as assets rather than liabilities. On the other hand, when intergenerational wealth flows is in favour of children, low fertility is economically rational. In this case, children are liabilities rather than assets (Caldwell, 1976).

Caldwell argues that in primitive and nearly all traditional societies, the flow of wealth is from children to parents. The result is high fertility because that is what is economically rational. Parents stand to benefit from unlimited number of children who would not only serve as a source of labour at childhood but also, when they grow older, become a source of old-age security

insurance for parents. This situation continues until there is what Caldwell calls the great economic divide, which is the point at which there is a reversal of net flows of wealth from the direction of parents to that of children and at which high fertility becomes irrational. Caldwell contends that prior to this economic divide, high fertility is rational even in non-agricultural urban conditions as long as the flow of wealth is from the younger to the older generation.

In a later work, Caldwell (1983:459) further reiterated the fact that in pre-transitional societies, “the net value of intergenerational wealth flows (labour and services, goods and money, as well as present and future guarantees, including old-age support) is upwards, whereas in post-transitional societies it is downwards”. Caldwell and Caldwell (1987) subsequently argued that in Africa, intergenerational wealth flows have remained in favour of parents because of the degree of filial devotion and the general strength of the kinship system.

From an early age, children are miniature workers in pre-transitional societies. They perform the less preferred chores which the older people cannot or will not do. The performance of these “children jobs” releases old family members to do more productive work and, hence, of indirect economic value (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003; Amoo, 2012; Wusu & Amoo, 2014; Wusu & Amoo, 2016). With reference to developing countries, Caldwell's

argument sheds some light on why marital fertility declined before urban industrialization in 18th century France and 19th century America (Johnson, 1984). In both cases of France and America, marital fertility declined on rural farms because intergenerational transfer of wealth favoured children.

Caldwell's idea of intergenerational wealth flows has attracted comments and criticism from a number of scholars. One criticism leveled against Caldwell's intergenerational wealth flows holds that children and wives do not generate more than they actually consume in pre-transitional societies. In his study of three traditional communities in eastern Paraguay and southern Peru, Kaplan (1994) came up with findings that contradict Caldwell's wealth flows hypothesis. The data from the three communities showed that even though children were very costly to raise, fertility was high. He, therefore, concluded that:

Although more data are necessary to determine whether the intergenerational wealth flow is downward in all societies, it should come as no surprise that under most conditions, humans, like all other known organisms, invest in, rather than exploit, their offspring (Kaplan, 1994).

This conclusion corroborates Olusanya's (1989) critique of Caldwell's intergenerational wealth flows. Olusanya begins by contending that the kind of questions contained in the value of children (VOC) questionnaires commonly used by researchers in

measuring intergenerational wealth flows “are obviously leading questions which yield disastrous results when put to illiterate and unsophisticated respondents” (p.79). He argues that Africans regard child-bearing as a God ordained societal function and not a commercial and meticulously calculated venture which the contents of VOC questionnaires tend to portray. African parents, it is argued, do not attach a price tag to their children and they never do a “costing” of them.

Olusanya avers that parents are not necessarily the beneficiaries of the balance of the flows of wealth between them and their children. In describing the Nigerian situation, he argues that the fact that parents tend to live in the rural areas while their children reside in the urban areas does not infer wealth flows from urban-based children to rural-based parents. This is because the needs of rural residents are basically subsistence, with clothing and accommodation of the simplest type and they do not cost much. To him, the so-called child-parent transfers of wealth are no more than occasional remittances (gifts) in cash and kind which urban-based children make when they visit their rural-based parents. In return, the children receive from their parents, loads of food items as free gifts, the cost of which are quite substantial by urban standards. Also, when rural-based parents visit their urban-based children, they take along with them gifts of foodstuff from villages, for their children. Olusanya further noted that in the event

that both aged parents and adult children reside in urban areas, the parents seldom expect gifts from their children who might be struggling to meet their own obligations. Indeed, such parents are either gainfully employed or rely on retirement benefits or engage in trade until very old age. He, therefore, concludes that parents' investments in children are so substantial that the net flow of wealth is not likely to be in their (parents) favour.

Olusanya argues further that what non-African researchers regard as 'child labour' or a 'flow of wealth' to parents is merely, a child's contribution to the smooth running of the household, which also, is part of the training required by the child to prepare him/her for adult life. To him, a child would be a liability to himself in future, if he folds his hands and stays idle while the adults carry out the day-to-day activities essential for the well-being of the household. The flow of wealth is, thus, to himself and not another. This is the way the Yoruba perceive it.

While Olusanya does not deny the fact that children do render help to parents in African households, around the home, on the farm and in market stalls, and that adult children do give support to aged parents, where necessary, he avers that, to suggest these to respondents as reasons for wanting a child or another child, is a perversion of African cultural values. However, what Olusanya fails to realize is that respondents in Nigeria, like in most less developed countries, often mention children as their source of

old-age support when simply asked to mention the sources from which they expect to get money to meet their needs when they become old (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985; Nwokocha, 2007). Empirical evidence also shows that Nigerian parents who expect old-age support from their children have higher fertility than those who do not. They also have higher ideal and desired family size (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994; Edewor, Ademiluyi & Okosun, 1997; 1997; Edewor, 2006a). When those who desire a large number of children are asked to give reasons for desiring such a number, a frequent answer is “so that I could have enough children to take care of me when I become old”.

## **NIGERIA'S FERTILITY LEVEL**

One of the most recent nationally representative data on fertility in Nigeria is the 2013 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) dataset. From this nationally representative survey, we extracted information on certain fertility indices to give us a picture of Nigeria's fertility situation. The indices include Total Fertility Rate (TFR), mean number of children ever born to women ages 40-49, mean ideal number of children and percentage of married women of reproductive age (women ages 15-49) using modern contraceptives. These are examined by selected background variables. As Table 5 shows, TFR is 5.5. This varies by the selected background characteristics. For example, rural

women have a TFR that is 1.5 children higher than that of urban women. It is inversely related to the level of education, with women without formal education having a TFR that is more than double that of women with tertiary education. It is also inversely related to wealth index, with the poorest women having a TFR that is almost double that of the richest. Also, the northern geo-political zones, especially the north-west and the north-east, have much higher TFRs than the southern geo-political zones.

The mean children ever born to women ages 40-49 is 6.3. Again, it shows a similar pattern as observed for TFR with rural women, women with no formal education or with low level of education, the poorer and poorest women as well as those from north-east and north-west geo-political zones recording very high numbers. Mean ideal family size (ideal number of children) is 6.5. It also shows a similar pattern, with rural women, those with no formal education, the poorest and those from the north-east and north-west geo-political zones recording very high figures. It is note-worthy that women with no formal education, the poorest and those from the north-west and north-east geo-political zones reported ideal family size of well over 8 children. The association between low level of education and high fertility is well established just as that between poverty and high fertility. These characteristics are common in the north-east and the north-west. As such, the high ideal family size reported is not surprising.

**Table 5: Fertility Indices by selected Background Characteristics, Nigerian Women 2013**

Background Variables	Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	Mean number of children ever born to Women 40-49	Mean ideal number of Children	% using modern contraceptives
<b>Place of Residence</b>				
Rural	6.2	6.8	7.2	5.7
Urban	4.7	5.6	5.6	16.9
<b>Educational level</b>				
No education	6.9	7.3	8.6	1.7
Primary	6.1	6.3	6.5	13.6
Secondary	4.6	4.9	5.1	18.7
Tertiary	3.1	3.9	4.5	22.4
<b>Wealth Index</b>				
Poorest	7.0	7.6	8.7	0.9
Poorer	6.7	7.2	7.7	3.7
Middle	5.7	6.5	6.6	9.1
Richer	4.9	5.7	5.6	14.4
Richest	3.9	4.5	4.7	23.4
<b>Geo-political Zone</b>				
North-Central	5.3	5.8	5.6	12.4
North-East	6.3	7.1	8.1	2.7
North-West	6.7	7.6	8.4	3.6
South-East	4.7	5.7	5.5	11.0
South-South	4.3	5.4	4.9	16.4
South-West	4.6	4.8	4.5	24.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>9.8</b>

Source: NPC & ICF International (2014)

It is also note-worthy that while the mean ideal number of children reported by the women was 6.5, that reported by the men was 8.0, 1.5 children higher than that reported by women. This underscores the importance of male role in fertility and the need to involve men and target them in family planning intervention programmes as championed by Isiugo-Abanihe (2003; 2010). The use of modern contraceptives is still as low as 9.8%. It is lowest



among rural women, women with no formal education, the poorest and those from the north-east and north-west geopolitical zones. Conversely, urban women, those with tertiary education, the richest and those from south-west geopolitical zone recorded the highest use of modern contraceptives.

**Table 6: Marriage and Childbearing Characteristics by Selected Background Variables, Nigerian Women, 2013**

<b>Background Variables</b>	<b>Median age at first marriage, women ages 25 - 49</b>	<b>Median age at first birth Women ages 25 -49</b>	<b>% of women ages 15 -19 who have begun childbearing</b>	<b>% of women ages 15 -49 who desire to limit childbearing</b>
<b>Place of Residence</b>				
Urban	a**	22.0	9.7	25.7
Rural	16.7	19.0	31.8	14.6
<b>Educational level</b>				
No education	15.6	18.1	47.6	11.1
Primary	17.9	19.5	32.2	29.2
Secondary	a**	22.4	9.1	22.8
Tertiary	a**	a*	1.7	26.6
<b>Wealth Index</b>				
Poorest	15.3	18.0	43.3	8.7
Poorer	16.2	18.5	34.5	13.2
Middle	18.2	19.5	21.4	20.6
Richer	19.9	20.8	13.0	25.0
Richest	a**	24.1	4.6	28.8
<b>Geo-political Zone</b>				
North-Central	19.1	20.6	18.8	23.0
North-East	16.4	18.8	32.1	10.2
North-West	15.4	17.9	35.7	7.9
South-East	a**	23.7	8.2	31.5
South-South	a**	21.8	12.3	29.7
South-West	a**	22.7	8.2	35.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>18.6</b>

*a\* = omitted because less than 50 percent of the women had a birth before reaching the beginning of the age group*

*a\*\*= omitted because less than 50 percent of the respondents began living with their spouse or partner for the first time before reaching the beginning of the age group*

Source: NPC & ICF International (2014)

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Table 6 presents marriage and childbearing characteristics of Nigerian women by selected background variables. As the Table shows, the median age at first marriage for women ages 25-49 years was 18.3 years. There are variations by the background variables. Those with low level of education and the poor marry earlier than those with higher level of education and the rich. Rural women, those with low level of education, the poor and those from the northern geopolitical zones (especially north-east and north-west) commence childbearing earlier than urban women, those with higher level of education, the rich and those from southern geo-political zones. They are also less likely to desire to limit childbearing relative to the urban women, the rich and those from southern geo-political zones. These explain the variations observed in the fertility indices recorded in Table 5. In the subsequent section, I present my contributions to scholarship.

### **MY CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP**

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, my first major contribution to scholarship can be seen in my effort at raising and mentoring younger academics. I am quite passionate about this and that is why since 2004 when my relationship with Covenant University started, God has enabled me to supervise the following doctoral students listed in the order in which they completed their work:

## **Ph.D Supervision**

1. Abimbola, Oluremi H. (2007). *Socio-cultural Factors in Entrepreneurial Event Formation*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Main Supervisor).
2. Egharevba, Matthew E. (2008). *Neo-liberal Socio-Economic Policy and Human Development in the Informal Sector of Lagos State*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Co-supervisor).
3. Ekeanyawu, Nnamdi T. (2008). *The Influence of Globalization and ICT on Indigenous Culture: A Study of the Perception of Nigerian Media Professionals*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Mass Communication, Covenant University, Ota. (Co-supervisor).
4. Iruonagbe, Charles T. (2009). *Land Ownership Patterns and the Economic Life of Women: A Study of Ozalla Community in Edo State*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Co-supervisor).
5. George, Tayo O. (2010). *Widowhood and Property Inheritance among the Awori of Ogun State, Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Main Supervisor).

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6. Ahmadu, Frederick O. (2013). *Postmodern Organization and Service Delivery in the Banking Industry in Lagos State, Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Co-supervisor).
  7. Idowu, Adenike E. (2013). *Socio-cultural Context of Maternal Health in Lagos State*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Main Supervisor).
  8. Ajayi, Mofoluwake P. (2013). *Work-Family Balance Among Women in Selected Banks in Lagos State, Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Main Supervisor).
  9. Ozoya, Mercy I. (2016). *Empowerment of Rural Women Farmers and Food Production in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Main Supervisor).
  10. Faniomi, Tomike I. (2017). *Gender Differentials in the Perception and Treatment of Mental Illness among the Yoruba of Ogun State, Nigeria*, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Sociology, Covenant University, Ota. (Co-supervisor).
  11. Allo, Tolulope A. (Ongoing). *Perceived Vulnerability and Disposition of Women to Breast Cancer Occurrence in Ogun State, Nigeria*, Ongoing Ph.D work (Main Supervisor).
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12. Ijagbemi, Oluwakemi S. (Ongoing). *Child Sexual Abuse in Lagos State, Nigeria: Prevalence, Determinants and Prevention Strategies*, Ongoing Ph.D work (Main Supervisor).
13. Ajayi, Olumuyiwa Olutosin (Ongoing). *Urban Slums, Gentrification and the Challenge of Development: A Study of Makoko Area of Lagos State, Nigeria*, Ongoing Ph.D work (Co-supervisor).

In the subsequent sections, I present my selected works which are related to the title of this inaugural lecture. There are social, cultural (including religious beliefs) and economic factors that affect fertility. In a work on the influence of religion on contraception and fertility (Edewor, 2005), I argued that there are religious rules on issues of contraception and abortion, entry into sexual unions and number of spouses one is permitted to have. There are also rules on divorce and remarriage, entry into subsequent unions after divorce or widowhood, sexual relations outside unions and frequency of intercourse within marriage. Many African religions promote prolonged post-partum abstinence. All these have implications for the level of fertility in a population. In this lecture, I choose to focus on the costs and value of children.

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**The Value of Children**

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, in 1988, the Armed Forces Ruling Council of the then military administration under the leadership of General Badamosi Babangida approved a national population policy for Nigeria, tagged a *National Policy on Population for Development, Unity, Progress and Self-Reliance*. Among the goals of the policy was the achievement of “lower population growth rates by voluntary fertility regulation methods that are compatible with the attainment of economic and social goals of the nation” (FRN, 1988). This was predicated on the realization of the fact that the problem of rapid population growth in the country was attributable to persistently high fertility in the face of sharply declining mortality. The policy stated that the annual rate of Nigeria's population growth which was then 3.3 percent was to be reduced to 2.5 percent by 1995 and 2.0 percent by the year 2000. Similarly, total fertility rate which was between 6 and 7 in 1988, was expected to decline to 4 children per woman by year 2000. The reduction in birth rates, and consequently, the rate of population growth was to be achieved through massive provision of family planning services.

By year 2000, not much was achieved in terms of widespread usage of family planning and reduction in family size and/or population growth. The population policy was reviewed and renamed the *National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development* in 2004. As at 2017, contraceptive prevalence rate

*“Be Fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth”*: *The motivation, the costs and the gains* among women ages 15-49 in Nigeria was still as low as 15 percent (any method), with only 10 percent using modern methods, while total fertility rate was still as high as 5.5 (PRB, 2017). Thus, even though the population policy was beautiful on paper, the implementation was a completely different issue. Indeed, an implementation assessment of the 2004 policy conducted in 2015 (the end date for most targets of the policy) revealed that even though the policy addressed the prevailing development issues of the time, it was not effectively implemented. Consequently, the policy targets were far from being achieved (FRN, 2015).

Empirical evidence suggests that the perceived value of children is a major determinant of the use of family planning for family size limitation. This was what prompted my study of the value of children both among the Yoruba and the Isoko of Nigeria since the perceived value of children by parents is a major determinant of preferred and actual family size, not only in traditional societies but also in modern societies.

By the value of children, we mean the benefits or satisfactions and costs of children to parents. It is the sum total of economic and socio-psychological gratifications derivable from children by parents as well as the direct and indirect costs of children to parents. The perceptions of these costs and benefits of children among parents serve as the motivating or the demotivating factors for child bearing. It is argued that the persistence of high fertility in Nigeria is attributable to the value

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parents place on children. In this regard, we will in the subsequent sections, examine children as contributors to household economy, children as a source of old-age security, the socio-psychological benefits of children, sex preference, children's schooling, as well as the perceived advantages and disadvantages of large number of children in Nigeria with specific reference to the Isoko and the Yoruba.

### ***Children as Contributors to Household Economy***

The contributions of children to household economy in most traditional societies are broadly classifiable into two: directly productive activities (including farming, fishing, tending animals and non-farm activities such as assisting parents in workshops) and indirectly productive activities (including cooking, washing, fetching water, sweeping, running errands, baby minding, fetching firewood, hawking or selling in market stalls). Among the Isoko and Yoruba, parents expect such practical and economic helps from children and children actually render such helps to their parents. In other words, children actively participate in the household economy (Orubuloye, 1987; Edewor, 2001a; Isiugo-Abanihe, 2003; Wusu & Amoo, 2016). Parents' expectations regarding children's economic help affect their fertility preferences and behaviour. Children's productive value as contributors to household income is a major component of their instrumental benefits to parents, particularly when they (the



*"Be Fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth": The motivation, the costs and the gains* children) are still young. When the children have become adults, they are also expected to provide their parents, old-age security and other financial assistance. This they actually do because of deep-rooted filial piety deriving from the culture of the people (Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1994).

Expectation of economic help from children among the Yoruba, as it also is among the Isoko, varies with the sex and age of the child as well as the sex and age of the parents and that is what it is in reality. When children are young, the kind of helps they render to parents (who also, are likely to be young) are mainly in practical terms such as assisting parents on the farm or assisting in their trade or business. Sons, particularly, are useful to parents especially their fathers, on the farm and in market stalls or workshops. In addition, depending on the occupation of the parents, they also assist their fathers in fishing, hunting or any other occupational activity engaged in by their fathers. Boys perform the more physically demanding tasks in the household such as farm cultivation. Besides these directly productive activities, they also participate in other indirectly productive activities especially running errands. Though to a lesser extent than do girls, boys also participate in the performance of household chores, especially where girls are absent. These include sweeping, fetching water, cleaning and washing of plates and clothes (Edewor *et al.*, 1997; Edewor, 2001b; Edewor, 2006a).

On the other hand, girls mainly assist their mothers in the

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performance of household chores mentioned above; they do this more than boys. While boys participate more in out-door activities, girls participate more in in-door activities. However, though to a lesser extent than boys and depending on the parents' occupation, they also contribute on the farm. In addition, girls assist their mothers in hawking or selling in market stalls and in many instances, they look after the younger ones at home (Edewor *et al.*, 1997).

When children have become adults, their contribution to household economy is expected to be monetary. Adult male children (whose parents are now likely to be aged) are particularly expected to support their parents financially. Although adult female children are also expected to provide some financial support to parents, it is not obligatory as in the case of adult males. The obligation of adult female children is first and foremost to their husbands. Also, the more educated a child is, the greater the financial help expected from him/her when he/she begins to earn income (Orubuloye, 1987).

Along with my colleagues, I conducted a study to interrogate the relationship between the value of children and fertility behaviour in three urban and two rural communities in Ogun State, Nigeria (Edewor *et al.*, 1997). The study was aimed at examining the value of children, fertility preferences and reproductive behaviour. A 73-item questionnaire was administered to randomly selected 1,302 ever married women

*“Be Fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth”*: *The motivation, the costs and the gains*

ages 15-49 and 703 men 60 years or less. The results showed that the respondents were mainly of the Christian and Islamic faiths. The mean ideal and desired family size reported was 5.5 and 4.5 respectively. Almost half of the women ensured pregnancy before marriage and the mean children ever born (CEB) and living children for women ages 15-49 years were 3.6 and 3.2 respectively (5.6 and 4.8 respectively for those ages 45-49 years). Unexpectedly, ideal and desired family size, CEB and living children were higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Ideal and desired family size was higher among men than among women. The perceived economic value of children was positively related to fertility ( $p < .05$ ). Those who would expect financial help from children had higher ideal and desired family size, CEB and living children than those who would not. The desire for sons was positively related to fertility ( $p < .001$ ). Socio-economic status and sex of respondent were significantly related to old-age security expectation from children ( $p < .001$ ). Old-age security expectation from children was stronger among women than among men.

Among the Isoko of Delta State, parents expect children to render certain practical and economic helps while they are growing up and after they have become adults. When young, children are expected to help on the farm, run errands, help in business, cook, sweep, wash plates or clothes, fetch water, look after younger ones and fetch firewood, in that order. The actual performance of these tasks varies by sex of child. Sons assist

mainly in running errands, working on the farm (especially in the rural areas), sweeping, washing plates or clothes and helping in business, in that order. To a lesser extent than do daughters, sons sometimes assist in other domestic chores. Daughters mainly assist their mothers in the performance of domestic chores. They also run errands and help on the farm, although not as much as sons do. Daughters and urban children begin to render help at a younger age than sons and rural children. Adult children, particularly sons, are expected to provide their parents with financial support, build houses for them, provide clothing and medical care and buy cars for their parents. They are also expected (especially the educated sons) to educate their younger siblings. Adult daughters are perceived to be more supportive of aged parents than adult sons (Edewor, 2001a).

The labour value of children has been considered one of the benefits of children especially in agrarian pre-transitional societies. This labour value of children was, among other things, one of the reasons for having large families in these societies. The traditional value of children is undergoing changes with consequences for fertility attitudes and preferences. Edewor (2014a) examined how socio-economic change, especially the advent of schooling, has affected children's participation in agriculture as well as the changing role of children. The paper was based on information generated from Focus Group Discussions conducted among men and women in two urban and four rural

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communities in the two Local Government Areas occupied by Isoko people of Delta State, Nigeria. It was observed that schooling has contributed to the decline in the labour value of children in the study area. In parental calculations, this decline and the higher costs of child rearing are counter-balanced by the benefits they would reap from their educated children in future. Adult children's contributions to parents' farming are becoming mainly monetary. They occasionally make remittances to their parents for their upkeep and also for hiring labourers to work on the farm. Farming is perceived by parents as a profession that entails much drudgery and associated with poverty. Rural farmers, therefore, prefer other kinds of job for their children, a situation that has implications for the continuity and sustenance of agriculture in Nigeria. This calls for an intervention programme aimed at changing the attitudes of both parents and children.

### ***Children as a Source of Old-age Security***

As in most less developed countries of the world, old-age security schemes are non-existent in Nigeria. Consequently, parents expect old-age support from their children. Indeed, children are about the only means of old-age support for most parents and they are particularly concerned about their old age; they look forward to their children at such an age when their strength would have waned. It is generally believed that a childless man or woman or one with insufficient number of children, particularly sons, would

suffer at his/her old age. In survey questionnaires, when parents were asked to mention the sources from which they would obtain money to meet their needs when they become old, majority mention children as their first source of old-age support. For example, this was observed in studies on the value of children conducted in Ogun and Delta States (Edewor *et al.*, 1997; Edewor 2001a; Edewor, 2006b).

In the Delta State study, the relationship between old-age security expectations and family size was explored among the Isoko (Edewor, 2006b). A sample of 2,045 women and men was selected for interview in two urban and four rural communities in which Focus Group Discussions were also conducted. The aim was to examine the old-age security value of children by socio-economic characteristics of respondents. The study showed that children remained the major source of old-age support in the study population. Rural respondents and women more readily mentioned children as a means of old-age support relative to urban respondents and men. An overwhelming majority of the respondents expected financial help from their children and they would still expect such help even after the children have become married. The expectation of financial help was inversely related to education, income and age at first marriage while it was positively related to ideal and desired family size. More of those who would have an additional child in the absence of sons or daughters, relative to those who would not, expected financial help from

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*"Be Fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth": The motivation, the costs and the gains*

children. These findings are similar to the findings in the Ogun State study. This points to the need for appropriate population education and communication programmes which suggest that few but well-educated, successful children can provide a better guarantee of old-age support than many non-educated and poor children.

### ***Socio-psychological Benefits of Children***

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, besides the economic and other instrumental benefits of children, there are also socio-psychological benefits of children which may perhaps be more important determinants of family size preferences and actual family size in most African societies. Children are perceived as a source of social prestige; they are considered as a means of enhancing one's status. A childless woman is negatively stigmatized. Isoko and Yoruba women, just like it is found in many Nigerian ethnic groups, are often addressed by the name of their first child as mother of so and so. A childless woman that is addressed differently is thus constantly reminded of her childlessness (Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1994; Edewor, 2001b). Thus, children bestow on parents, a special coveted status.

In addition, children are believed to be the means of perpetuating the lineage. This lineage consists of the dead ancestors, those currently living and those yet unborn. It is through children that the continuity of the lineage is ensured. A childless

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man is, therefore, the most pitied because it is believed that his branch of the lineage would end with his death. Children are also valued for their inheritance role. Family properties are considered lost at the death of parents when there are no children to inherit them. Children, particularly sons, inherit land, buildings and savings of a deceased head of household. Titles and rulership seats are also mainly inherited by sons (Edewor *et al.*, 1997; Edewor, 2001b).

Children are also perceived as a means of getting a befitting burial. As in most Nigerian ethnic groups, the Yoruba and the Isoko attach a lot of importance to burial ceremonies. As such, parents desire children whom they expect to give them, a befitting burial. For example, there is the general belief among the Yoruba that “*eni omọ sin lo bi'mọ*”. That is, “it is the person that receives a befitting burial from children that actually begat children”. This illustrates the importance attached to having a befitting burial. The concern for a befitting burial at death is, therefore, a major reason for desiring a large number of children, particularly sons, in the pretext that out of the lot, there would be those that would give them a befitting burial.

Owing to these socio-psychological benefits of children, a new bride is expected to get pregnant immediately after wedding. In some instances, especially among the Yoruba, in spite of the traditional norms that encourage chastity and pre-marital virginity, a would-be couple ensures pregnancy before marriage as a proof



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of the woman's fertility or of the man's virility. Where this is not ensured before marriage, a delay in pregnancy is usually a cause of anxiety for the woman. Her husband is normally encouraged by his parents and/or his relatives to take another wife or try another woman outside. Childlessness is thus a cause of polygyny and sometimes, a cause of divorce. On the other hand, the arrival of the first child, particularly a son, strengthens a woman's position in her matrimonial home. Thus, the existence of children in a marriage is positively related to marital stability.

For Africans, children are regarded as wealth or even greater than wealth. They are also a source of joy, honour and prestige. These perceptions of the value of children are reflected in the names given to them. For example, among the Yoruba, it is common to find such names as *Qmqlayq* (children are joy), *Qmqlade* (children are a crown), *Qmqlqla* or *Qmqlorq* (children are wealth), *Qmojqqla* (children are greater than wealth), *Qmoyajowo* (children are better than money), *Qmqlniyi* (children are a prestige) and *Qmqlẹyẹ* (children are an honour) (Orubuloye, 1995; Edewor *et al.*, 1997, Edewor, 2001b).

There are other names which depict the joy at the arrival of a new baby. For example, *Ayqdele* (joy reaches our home), *Ayqrinde* (joy walks into our home), *Ayqdeji* (joy becomes two) and *Titilayq* (endless is my joy) (Orubuloye, 1995; Edewor *et al.*, 1997; Edewor, 2001b). Isoko people also have similar names for their children. To the average Isoko person, children are

considered as wealth. This perception of the value of children as well as the other importance attached to children are reflected in the names that parents give to their children as can be seen from the following:

<i>Qm̄q̄efe</i>	-	Children are wealth
<i>Efem̄ena</i>	-	This is my wealth
<i>Efezino</i>	-	Wealth has come
<i>Ighom̄ena</i>	-	This is my money
<i>Qm̄q̄erere</i>	-	A child is gain (profit)
<i>Ererem̄ena</i>	-	This is my gain
<i>Qm̄q̄oroq̄</i>	-	A child makes marriage
<i>Qm̄q̄owho</i>	-	A child makes a person
<i>Qm̄q̄wera</i>	-	A child is sweet
<i>Ewomaq̄zino</i>	-	Goodness has come
<i>Orom̄ena</i>	-	This is my prestige (or glory)
<i>Onaoro</i>	-	This is prestige (or glory)
<i>Qm̄q̄ode</i>	-	A child is name (fame)
<i>Ogh̄ogh̄o</i>	-	Joy

These names capture very vividly, the people's perception of the importance of children (Edewor, 2001a).

In Isokoland, children are especially considered as a source of old-age security. This appears to be the most important reason for having children among Isoko people. In addition, they are perceived as a means of perpetuating the lineage, a source of

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prestige and a source of defence, especially where there are many sons. They inherit family property and the sons retain family name. Children are also considered as companions and a source of joy. Marriages without children are unstable and often break down. Childlessness is also recourse to polygyny, as is the absence of sons. The name *Oga* is used to describe a barren person among Isoko people and it has attached to it, a negative social stigma. Such a person is looked upon with disdain. If it is a woman, she is thought to be possessed by water spirit or to have a spirit husband to whom she bears her children in the spirit world. It is also believed that she is either a witch that bears her children in their coven or bewitched by some other persons. She could also be thought to have been wayward earlier in life and may have destroyed her womb through repeated abortions. This is especially so if she is highly educated. Children are, therefore, considered to be very important.

### ***Sex Preference***

Sex preference, especially the preference for sons, is a major determinant of family size (Karki, 1988). A strong preference for sons helps to sustain high fertility because son preference may cause couples to have more than their desired number of children in the bid to have enough sons or at least a son. Son preference is still pervasive in most African societies including Nigeria. Although some slight changes are beginning to be recorded in

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southern Nigeria, for example, among the Yoruba and the Isoko, son preference still exists. And it is more pronounced among men relative to women and among older, rural and parents with low level of education relative to the younger, urban and parents with high level of education (Edewor, *et al.*, 1997; Edewor, 2001a; Edewor, 2006a).

In the Ogun and Delta States' studies, the mean desired number of daughters was less than the mean desired number of sons and just like the mean desired number of sons, it was higher among men and rural respondents relative to women and urban respondents. Sons were preferred for retention of family name, for being pillars of the home, for inheritance purposes, for being a source of defence (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985, Edewor, 2001a; Edewor, 2006a), for remaining in family compound, for being physically stronger, for prestige, for being more reliable, for provision of old-age support, for representing fathers, to please husbands (reported by wives), to get more land and a befitting burial, in that order. Those who preferred daughters did so because of daughters' more caring nature, for marrying and linking parents with in-laws, for their usefulness in domestic work, for ease of control and to get a befitting burial, in that order.

Empirical evidence shows that parents without sons are the least likely to have ever used modern contraceptives. However, parents who have one daughter, in addition to sons, are most likely to have ever used modern contraceptives than parents with only

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sons and no daughters (Oyeka, 1989). This shows that even though there is the general preference for sons, parents would still want at least a daughter.

Apart from the reason of economic support provided by sons, Yoruba parents also prefer them to daughters for retaining family name, permanently residing at home or near the residence of their ancestors, being inheritors of property and for being pillars of the family. Those who indicate preference for daughters do so for the emotional benefits derivable from them, including being more caring for aged parents and for their more sympathetic nature. Daughters are also valued for their usefulness in performing household chores, for their ease of control, for linking their parents and kin with other families through marriage and of course, conceiving and bearing children (Edewor *et al.*, 1997; Edewor, 2006b).

The contribution of children to household economy, their perception as a means of old-age security, their socio-psychological benefits and the preference for sons are the motivating factors for large family size preferences and actual fertility. They are also the perceived value or benefits of children. We shall now turn to the costs of children which could inhibit or discourage high fertility.

**The Costs of Children**

Besides the perceived costs of children, Edewor (2001a) and Edewor *et al.* (1997) examined the proportions of certain real direct costs such as costs of children's food, children's medical costs, costs of children's clothing, costs of children's education, costs of housing and costs of children's transport that are borne by self, spouse, own children, own relatives, spouse's relatives and other. It was observed that the costs of these items are mainly borne by parents, although more persons tend to share these costs of children in the rural areas. Rural children also bear higher proportions of these costs relative to their urban counterparts.

On the basis of sex, fathers bear a higher proportion of these costs relative to mothers, although mothers contribute substantially to children's clothing. Children also appear to bear more of the costs of their own clothing, relative to all other costs. Women in polygynous unions tend to bear higher proportions of these costs than those in monogamous unions.

Majority of the respondents (90.7%) were of the view that it was more expensive to raise children at the time of the study than it was a decade before the study. Three-quarters of the respondents also reported that the costs of rearing children have prevented them from purchasing some of the things needed for themselves. These were mainly those with high parity and high fertility preferences. However, in spite of the perceived high costs of children, two-thirds of the respondents considered the benefits of

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children as outweighing the costs. This opinion on children is likely to continue to perpetuate high fertility.

On children's education, two-thirds of the respondents considered their children's education a financial burden. More men and rural respondents relative to women and urban respondents, considered their children's education as a financial burden. The consideration of children's education as a financial burden was positively related to household size, children ever born, living children and fertility preferences ( $p < 0.001$ ). In spite of the financial burden of children's education, the parents had high aspirations for their children's education. Focus Group Discussions revealed that sons were given more educational opportunities in the past. Things have, however, changed (particularly among the Isoko) because of the increasing realization that a girl's education is very rewarding, especially since daughters have been found to be more caring for aged parents than sons.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Large Families**

On the advantages of large families, more hands to help on the farm or in business, social prestige, more old-age support and more hands to fight during inter-family conflicts, in that order, were the most frequently cited advantages of large families among Isoko people. The likelihood that some of the children might become successful, insurance against infant and child mortality,

being a source of joy, companionship and getting more land during land sharing, in that order, were the other reported advantages of having children.

Economic burden was reported to be the major disadvantage of large families. Other reported disadvantages include difficulty in controlling the children, the tendency for the children to become delinquents or criminals (in the case of boys) or prostitutes and witches (in the case of girls), frequent strife and petty jealousy among children, increased poverty as well as the health consequences for the woman. It is believed (especially among the Yoruba) that a large number of children could increase poverty, hence, the popular saying: *Ọmọ bẹrẹrẹ, oṣi bẹrẹrẹ* (lots of children, lots of misery or poverty). The Yoruba also recognize the fact that there are likely to be frequent strife and petty jealousy among siblings from large families, especially if they are polygynous families.

In spite of these disadvantages of large families, and the costs of raising children, majority of the Isoko and the Yoruba consider the benefits or the advantages of children as outweighing the costs or the disadvantages. It is believed that with many children, the chances are high that some of them would make it in life and become very important personalities. This perception has continued to perpetuate high fertility among the people.



### **Schooling, Value of Daughters and Girls' Education**

Schooling is one of the ways through which the costs of children increase. Empirical evidence suggests that there is an inverse relationship between child's schooling and fertility. With modernization, there is an increased parental aspiration for children's education. Consequently, parents tend to demand for fewer children of higher quality. In traditional times in both the Yoruba and Isoko societies, boys were given more educational opportunities because it was boys' education that was thought to be rewarding to parents as daughters soon got married and left for their husbands' families and also changed names. Besides, many girls got pregnant in schools which terminated their schooling and consequently wasted the financial investments in their education. However, changes are occurring in the perception of the value of daughters and girls education. The proportion of girls who now attend school has increased significantly relative to the past.

The changing perception of the value of daughters and girls' education was examined among the Isoko of southern Nigeria (Edewor, 2006a). The study utilized information generated from Focus Group Discussions in two urban and four rural communities. Eight Focus Groups were constituted in each of the towns and villages (four for men and four for women). The groups were homogenous in terms of sex, age and educational level. It was observed that parents' perception of the value of daughters was changing because adult daughters had been found

to be more supportive of aged parents than adult sons. Consequently, parents considered the education of daughters to now be very rewarding since educated daughters become better equipped to provide support to their parents. The changing attitudinal disposition towards girls' education has implication for the enhancement of the status of women and fertility decline.

### **Homeless Children and Youths**

A common feature of many large cities in Nigeria, especially, Lagos, is the presence of homeless children and youths. They are also known as “children of the street” in that they work and live on the street. They are different from other street children (children in the street) who normally return home to sleep at night (Ebigbo, 1988; Maduewesi, 1992). While the problem of homelessness may be attributable to poverty and the congestion in cities (Edewor, 2007; Aduwo, Edewor & Ibem, 2016; Edewor, Imhonopi, Chiazor, Derby & Adetunde, 2016), there may be other more fundamental associated factors, especially in the case of children and youths. It was on the basis of this that I carried out a study on homeless children in Lagos, Nigeria with particular reference to their characteristics, street life and sexual behaviour (Edewor, 2014b).

A number of studies (Ebigbo and Izuora, 1985; Okpara, 1988; Oloko, 1988; Shindi, 1988; Ebigbo and Abaga, 1990) had examined various aspects and features of the activities of street

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children, particularly hawking and street trading. These studies focused on “children in the street”, who were not necessarily homeless. My study was a departure from these in that it was not on street children in general but on those who work and live on the streets. The study was aimed at understanding the characteristics, street life and sexual behaviour of homeless children and youths as well as the causes, problems and policy implications of homelessness. A survey of 447 homeless children and youths in three purposively selected parts of Lagos metropolis was carried out. The results showed that majority of the respondents were males. They had low level of education and were from poor and large families most of which were polygynous. Parental neglect, discontent at home, marital instability in family of orientation, poverty and peer influence were the major causes of being on the street. They slept under bridges, at the beach, in motor parks and vehicles, in market places, and in uncompleted buildings. Their survival strategies include engaging in some income-yielding activities such as carrying loads, being bus conductors, packing refuse, buying and selling, engaging in commercial sex (the girls) and begging. Substance abuse and engaging in risky sexual behaviour were common. They faced the problem of insecurity, police harassment and all forms of exploitation and maltreatment from social miscreants (area boys). They were also predisposed to a number of hazards including sexual abuse, molestation and health hazards.

**Quality of Life in Africa**

In a work on the quality of life in Africa (Edewor, 2002), I utilised secondary data on some indices of quality of life in African countries (and some selected countries of Europe and North America, for comparative purposes). The indices of quality of life used include infant mortality rate, prevalence of child malnutrition, under 5 mortality rate per 1,000, life expectancy at birth, percent of population with access to sanitation, percent of population with access to safe water, adult illiteracy rate and Gross National Income Purchasing Parity (GNI PPP) per capita. All these show low quality of life. For instance, compared with those of countries in Europe and North America, infant mortality, prevalence of child malnutrition, under 5 mortality rate per 1,000 and adult illiteracy rate were very high. On the other hand, life expectancy at birth, percent of population with access to sanitation, percent of population with access to safe water and Gross National Income Purchasing Power Parity (GNI PPP) per capita were very low.

Continued high population growth rate in Africa undermines the best efforts at improving the quality of life. Although fertility rates continue to decline in some countries, particularly those with relatively higher incomes, fertility rates are still high in most African countries. Consequently, the annual population growth rate in Africa is still as high as 2.52 percent, the

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highest in the world. Owing to the high fertility rate, the age structure of the African populations is such that there is a preponderance of young persons and consequently, a high dependency burden which serves as an impediment to the realization of socio-economic development goals.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the rapid population growth in African countries, including Nigeria, is largely a function of persistently high fertility in the face of sharply declining mortality. There is an ever growing desire in every nation to reduce mortality rates to a very low level. If fertility levels are not reduced correspondingly, the populations of African countries will continue to escalate. Fertility reduction will come mainly through widespread use of family planning techniques. However, there are social, cultural and economic roots of the high fertility regime in Africa among which is the perceived costs and benefits of children. As long as Africans perceive large families as advantageous or as long as children are perceived as economic assets that contribute to household economy or who serve as a means of old-age security support, high fertility will persist. Similarly, socio-psychological benefits of children including the perception of children as source of social prestige or as instruments of the enhancement of social status, and son preference will continue to sustain high fertility.

High fertility is associated with poverty. The poorest countries of the world have the highest fertility levels. Within countries, the poorest individuals also have the highest fertility because of the consideration of children as wealth. This condition perpetuates poverty. Poverty breeds poverty through this means and a vicious cycle of poverty is created. Where there is poverty, there will be high fertility. With high fertility, there will be a preponderance of young persons which will lead to high dependency burden. High dependency burden will lead to low propensity to save, which will, in turn, lead to low investments. Low investments will lead to low capital formation which will create unemployment and eventually lead to poverty. Mr. Chancellor, Sir, it is a vicious cycle of poverty. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

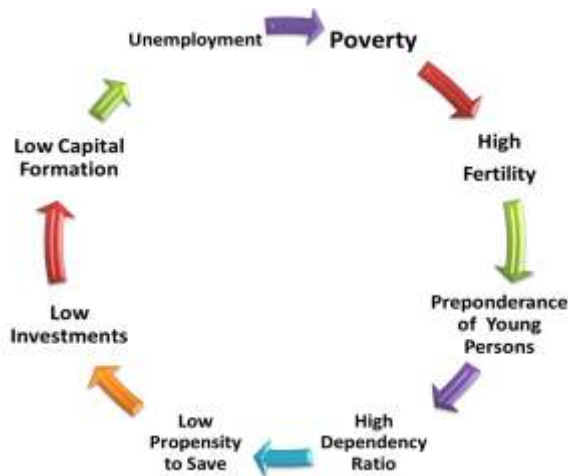


Figure 5: A Vicious Cycle of Poverty

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Thus, at the micro and macro societal levels, prolific child bearing, high fertility and rapid population growth are disadvantageous especially in a country in which the economy is growing much more slowly as is the case of Nigeria and most countries of Africa.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the keys to fertility reduction are poverty reduction and more importantly, mass education, especially for the girl child. Education is the best “contraceptive”. It will raise the age at marriage for the female and change the life styles and world-view of men and women. It will also raise the cost of rearing children through widespread schooling which will reduce their labour value. Educated women engage in occupations that are incompatible with childbearing and rearing. Education will cause couples to become knowledgeable about family planning techniques. It will enhance women's status and create a more egalitarian relationship among couples that will foster inter-spousal communication regarding family size and family planning. Education will also alter traditional high fertility norms. Educated men and women are less likely to depend on children as a means of old-age support. They are also less likely to have son preference that could lead to high fertility. In addition, their children are more likely to survive; hence, they do not need to have many children as insurance against infant and child mortality. Therefore, as I conclude this lecture, I submit that the solution to the problem of high fertility and rapid population

growth in Nigeria and Africa is more investment in education. A vigorous pursuit of education, especially for the girl child and particularly in the northern geo-political zones of Nigeria, coupled with social and economic development, is the way to go if we are to reduce fertility and stem the rapid rate of population growth.

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*I have seen the Lord's goodness, His mercies and compassion*

*I have seen the Lord's goodness, Halleluiah praise the Lord*

*I have seen the Lord's goodness, His mercies and compassion*

*I have seen the Lord's goodness, Halleluiah praise the Lord*

*Oh Lord You have been so good, You are so good to me*

*Oh Lord You are excellent in my life everyday*

*Oh Lord You have been so good, You are so good to me*

*Oh Lord you are excellent in my life*

*All the glory must be to the Lord*

*For He is worthy of our praise*

*No man on earth should give glory to himself*

*All the glory must be to the Lord*

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