

APPRAISAL OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON POPULATION CONTROL AND IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The study evaluated the perception of secondary school students on population control measures. Three research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. A sample of 1000 secondary school students was randomly drawn through a stratified random sampling technique. The study was carried out in Delta State of Nigeria. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire containing population control measures was used to obtain information on the perception of secondary school students. Percentage, Analysis of variance and F-test were used for data analysis. Seven measures for population control were evaluated. The result showed that the most preferred measure by students is population control through education and counselling. Perception of students did not differ significantly. Recommendations were made for effective counselling on population control.

Keywords: *Perception, population, counselling.*

Introduction

Population in terms of human beings is the number of people in a place. Therefore, population control is an attempt to control the number of people in a place to a manageable size.

Population has been increasing every year in the world. It was reported that the world population increases by 70 million every year (Teriba, 1980). There are about 5.8 billion human beings on the planet (Sullivan, 2003). The increase in population in most countries had led to economic and social problems. These include low per capital income, shortage of food, unemployment, overcrowding of cities and different social crimes. These problems call for control and a well-planned population. There was a need to evaluate the perception of secondary school students on population control measures. Some of these measures include: counselling, decrease in birthrate, abortion, sterilization, infanticide, family planning method and repatriation of some foreigners.

Mallum and Obe (2003) recommended population education as well as guidance and counselling to population control. With this recommendation, it is expected that when students receive counselling about marriage early enough; they would be able to control their family population. The students need enough counselling in the secondary schools as

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

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

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

entering the country. In spite of government efforts to control the population, it has continued to increase.

There are various population control measures. Some have been identified. These include education and counselling, decrease in birth rate, abortion, sterilization, infanticide family planning method, repatriation of illegal immigrant and public enlightenment programmes. There was need to make judgment on these measures. Therefore, the study investigated the evaluation of students' perception on the population control measures.

Evaluation is a judgment. It helps to determine students' behaviour. That is how they think, feel and react to programmes or issues. These aspects of behaviour could be determined through valid and reliable techniques such as test questionnaire, observation, rating scale and anecdotal record. It is also the extent to which objectives of a programme are being achieved. (Gronlund, 1985). However, the study helped to judge how secondary school students think, feel and react on population control measures. This became necessary to guide them before they marry or begin to have children.

Purpose of the Study

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

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- (1) What is the perception of students on population control measures?
- (2) What is the perception of male and female students on population control?
- (3) What is the perception of students in their school-type on population control?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses below were tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on population control.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of students in Boys', Girls', and Mixed secondary schools on population control.

Methodology

Design

The study is a 2 x 3 factorial design. Gender and school-type of students' perception on population control were determined.

Sample

The sample consisted of 1000 students randomly drawn from 20 secondary schools. The sample was stratified on 500 male and 500 female students randomly selected from senior secondary schools. Simple random sampling of balloting was used to select 20 secondary schools from 320. The sample of students was stratified on their gender for equal representation.

Instrument

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

Validity and Reliability

The instrument (SPCI) was constructed with high content and face validity. The instrument contains the population control measures. The items were analyzed with the use of Cronbach Alpha. There was a multiple response such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. A reliability index of 0.83 was obtained as the coefficient of internal consistency. The coefficient was significant at .05. This made the instrument very suitable for the study.

Data Analysis

Percentages were used to analyze the research questions. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and F-test was applied to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

The two research questions and two hypotheses for the study were presented and analyzed as follows:

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

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

S/N.	Population control measures	Percentage
1.	Education and Counselling	50.1
2.	Decrease in birth rate	9.8
3.	Abortion	7.6
4.	Sterilization	1.1
5.	Infanticide	1.2
6.	Family planning	20.0
7	Repatriation of illegal immigrant and migration control	10.2
	Total	100.0

Table 1 Show the percentage response of students on population control measures. Most of the students favoured the use of education and counselling representing 50.1%. Others include Decrease in birth rate 9.8%, Abortion 7.6%, Sterilization 1.1%, infanticide 1.2%, Family planning 20%, Repatriation of illegal immigrant and migration control 10.2%.

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

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

GENDER	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE		
	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
Male	42	1.2	7.5
Female	39.2	0.7	9.4
Total	9.4	1.9	16.9

Table 2 indicates the percentage response of male and female students on population control measures when the 5-point scale was collapsed to Agree, Undecided and Disagreed. It was still possible to observed gender response respectively. The percentage score of 42 revealed that most male students agreed on population control. Naturally, some male students were undecided (1.2%) while others disagreed (7.5%). The table also presents 39.2% as the response of female students who agreed on population control 0.7% of them disagreed while 9.4% ere undecided. Generally, the overall percentage response of 81.2 showed that majority of male and female students agreed on the issue of population control. Again, 1.9% of the students were undecided while 16.9% disagreed.

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

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

SCHOOL-TYPE	PERCENTAGE RESPONSE		
	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed
Boys' School	26.9	1.5	6.6
Girls' School	25.8	1.3	5.4
Mixed School	23.6	4.4	19.3
Total	76.3	7.2	31.3

Table 3 shows the percentage response of students in their various school-type on population control. A total of 76.3% Agreed on population control; 7.2% were Undecided and 31.3% Disagreed.

Hypothesis one and two were verified with ANOVA and F-test as shown below.

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

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Squares	Calculated F	Critical F at .05	Decision
Gender of Students	19.2	1	19.2	1.22	3.85	Accept
School-type	29	2	14.5	0.92	3.00	Accept
Interaction	207	2	103.5	6.55	3.00	Reject
Residual	15705.2	994	15.8			
TOTAL	15960.4	999				

Table 4 presents the results of hypotheses one and two. Hypothesis one states: There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on population control. The result shows that the calculated F-ratio of 1.22 was less than the critical F of 3.85 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis one was accepted. The result implied that there was no gender perception difference on population control. Both male and female students support population control.

Hypotheses two stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of students in Boys', Girls' and Mixed secondary schools on population control. The result indicates that the calculated F-ratio of 0.92 was less than the critical F of 3.00 at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis two was accepted. Both null hypotheses one and two were accepted.

Discussion

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

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

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

Implications for Counselling

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

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

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Guidance and counselling services should be provided to on population control measures.

2. There should be counselling centres in places of work, religious places and communities. This will help to reach out to both married and unmarried persons.
3. Counselling on population control should be a continuous process. There should be enough information on population control measures.
4. Counsellors should discourage punitive population control measures. These include abortion, dumping of babies in refuse bin, toilet, and public places.
5. The school curriculum for guidance and counselling should include counselling for good family planning.

Conclusion

Perception of students on population control has been evaluated. It was observed that most of the students favoured the use of education and counselling for population control. The schools used in this study have counsellors. The favourable response of students on population control through counselling revealed the impact of guidance and counselling in schools. Most students perceive counselling as the best way of solving their problems.

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