

Population Growth and Economic Development in a Developing Context : Problems and Policies

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Most LDCs are characterized by high fertility rates which have threatened the quality of life in such countries. Apart from this macro-economic growth variables are at a peril. This study addresses the issue of population growth and economic development and shows that a two way relationship exists between both concepts. It isolates some pertinent factors responsible for high fertility rates in LDCs, and Nigeria in particular. On the basis of these factors the study then suggests both direct and indirect measures such as birth controls and mass education, among others, to reduce high fertility. Above all, development should be designed in such a way as to eliminate distortionary macro-economic policies that favour the richer groups in the economy.

Introduction

One of the most important factors that threatens the quality of human life and existence, especially in developing countries (LDCs) today is the "ever expanding human numbers". With an estimated world population of well over 5 billion, the LDCs account for about 80% of this number. The current annual rate of natural increase ranges from 0.3% in some DCs to 3.5% Mexico. On the average the rate of natural increase is about 2% world wide. With the present rate it takes just about 35 years for world population to double (Makinde, 1985). What is more disturbing is the fact that the LDCs with about 80% of the world's population experience the highest rate of growth but commands only 20% of the world's resources while the DCs with lower growth rates command as much as 80% of the world's resources but with only about 20% of world's population.

Rapid population growth in LDCs and the present resources distribution of the world has serious consequences for the wellbeing of mankind in LDCs. Human dignity, health, income and even the freedom to choose are at a peril. The average man in the LDCs lives in the periphery without the basic necessities of life. It is on the basis of all the above that population issues have attracted greater attention in the past two decades or so.