

The Population Situation in Cross River State of Nigeria and Its Implication for Socio-Economic Development: Observations from the 1991 and 2006 Censuses

¹Joseph G. Ottong, ¹Simon. O. Ering, and ²Felix. U. Akpan

¹Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Calabar. Nigeria

²Department of Political Science, University Of Calabar, Calabar. Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Simon. O. Ering

Abstract

This paper examines population patterns in Cross River State against the backdrop of 1991 and 2006 censuses and the socio-economic implications for the development of the State. It is predicated on the apriori that the population phenomenon has had profound impact on the socio-economic development of society. The paper identifies and discusses some demographic features, which have implications for urbanization, education, youth dependency, and the provision of infrastructures. The issues discussed have wider applicability for Nigeria and its constituent sub-regions. We have suggested, among other things, better grasp of the population and development relationship and the need for clear and articulate population policies, which aim at slowing down the growth rate of the population through proper harnessing of the vital processes.

Keywords: socio-economic, development, population situation, population momentum, age dependency ratio, youth dependency and infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

Cross River State, as a geo-political entity, came into being first as South Eastern State in May, 1967, as a result of the structuring of Nigeria into twelve states by Gen. Yakubu Gowon. In 1976, Gen. Murtala Mohammed's administration restructured Nigeria into a nineteen state structure, and as a result of the exercise, South Eastern State was renamed, Cross River State, but still composed of the areas that make up the present Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State. However, with the excision of Akwa Ibom State from the old Cross River State on September 23, 1987, what remains of the old Calabar and Ogoja provinces; make up the present political entity called Cross River State. The State which is made up of eighteen (18) Local Government Areas is situated within the tropics and share common boundary with the Republic of Cameroun in the East, Benue State in the North, Abia and Ebonyi States in the West and Akwa Ibom State/Atlantic Ocean in the South. It lies between latitudes 5^o32¹ and 4^o027¹ and 9^o28¹ East. The major focus of attention in this paper is the population of the State. Cross River State, as it is true of the entire country, Nigeria, has witnessed steady increase in population over the years. This, of course, is a global phenomenon, but the rate of increase has been observed to be relatively more rapid in the developing (or less developed) countries than in the developed countries. It is believed that population, in terms of, the phenomenon of population pressure, might have some telling effects on socio-economic development. Consequently, there is a growing concern in the awareness of the importance of population factors in socio-economic development, especially since after the

African Population Conference of 1994 in Ibadan and the World Population Conference in the same year – 1974, in Bucharest. In Africa the awareness is gaining momentum especially where post independence development efforts to improve the living standards of the people appear to have failed. However, the situation has not yet generated sufficient concern which might lead to the formulation of articulate population policies in relation to socio-economic policies. This paper takes a look at the population situation in Cross River State and its implications for socio-economic development with particular reference to urbanization, education and labour force, food supply and health, and the policy indicators arising therefrom.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The paper is essentially, a library research and relies heavily on data from the 1991 and 2006 censuses of Nigeria, as published by the National Population Commission (NPC). The use of the census data is based on the fact that the census is a compendium of population information, and therefore, constitutes a useful framework for population analysis and the interpretation thereof. The other sources of information include Government publications; Cross River State (CRS) statistical Year Book, 2005 and 2006; journals (etc). Relevant data obtained from the sources were collated, as appropriate, and utilized in addressing the research problem. Information obtained from the related sources are brought to bear in the analysis of the population data as well as in the interpretation of the implications for socio-economic development.

The Population Situation

Cross River State lies in the palm forest belt of Nigeria, which constitutes one of the more populous areas of the country (Ottong, 1986). In the 1991 and 2006 population censuses of Nigeria the population of the State was 1,911,297 and 2,888,966, respectively. The distribution of the 1991 and 2006 census figures by Local Government Area both in absolute numbers and percentages are given in Table 1. The information in Table 1 is represented in Fig. 1, the density is alarming increase and a pointer to issues of policy. A comparison of the two census figures shows a quantum leap in the population of Cross River State for a period of 15 years with an increase of over 50 percent between the two censuses. The increase is reflected in Table which shows the population of the state and the distribution Local Government Areas.

Table 1: The Population of Cross River State in 1991 and 2006 by Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Population			
	1991		2006	
	N	%	N	%
Akamkpa	118,472	(6.20)	151,125	(5.23)
Calabar	143,089	(7.49)	179,392	(6.21)
Municipality	140,234	(7.34)	162,383	(5.62)
Ikom	134,225	(7.02)	172,444	(5.97)
Obubra	84,799	(4.44)	160,106	(5.54)
Obudu	122,352	(6.40)	192,444	(6.66)
Odukpani	110,539	(5.78)	171,901	(5.95)
Ogoja	134,773	(7.05)	196,450	(6.80)
Yakurr	101,121	(5.29)	169,183	(5.86)
Biase	145,010	(7.59)	186,141	(6.44)
Boki	156,617	(8.19)	210,843	(7.30)
Yala	48,611	(2.54)	110,324	(3.82)
Obanliku	100,424	(5.25)	271,395	(9.39)
Akpabuyo	78,452	(4.10)	144,802	(5.01)
Abi	3,827	(0.20)	32,385	(1.12)
Bakassi	57,965	(3.03)	105,822	(3.66)
Bekwarra	185,787	(9.72)	191,630	(6.63)
Calabar South	45,299	(2.37)	80,196	(2.76)
Etung				
State Total	1,911,596		2,888,966	

Source: National Population Commission, Nigeria 1991 and 2006 Population Census.

The density of 134 for 1991 and 293 in 2006 conceals the rather acute situation in Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Areas and Ikom, Boki, and Ogoja Local Government Areas (in southern, central and northern parts of the state).

The Bakassi problem has created a rather acute situation of population pressure on resources in Akpabuyo and Bakassi Local Government Areas, as a result of population density.

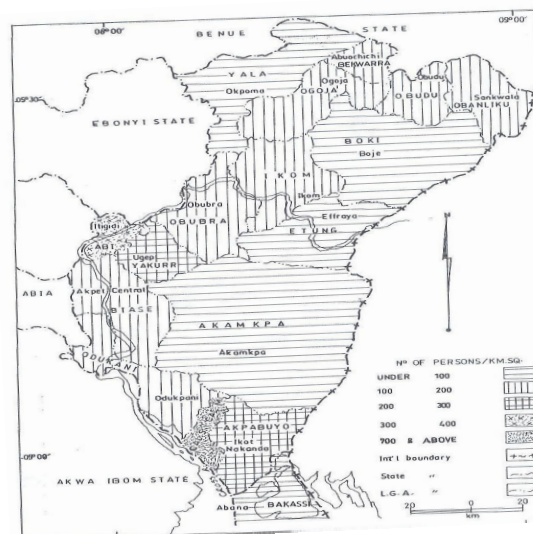


Fig.1: Cross River State Population density
Source: National Population Commission.

Given the annual exponential growth rate of the population at 3.0, percent the population of the State increased to 2.9 million by 2006 from 1.9 million in 1991. Indeed, the population momentum in the State is such that by the end of the 2025 the population is likely to be almost twice the 2006 figures using the constant annual growth rate of 3.0 percent. This is shown in Table 2, with a population projection of 5,222,299. The population situation is further exacerbated by the dynamism in State craftsmanship by the Donald Duke Administration, (1999-2007). The restructuring of the State economy leading to the development of TINAPA and Obudu Cattle Ranch projects and other enabling policies, has increased the tempo of economic activities in the state. This implies that even with a planned minimum annual economic growth rate of a 10 per cent, the state needs to seriously face up to the challenge of moderating the population growth rate to about two percent or below to enhance economic growth. It is noted that issues of poverty have population undertones, and that high rates of poverty generally correlate with large households, leading to overstretched facilities and security problems.

Table 2. Projected Population of Cross River State at 5 years interval from 1991 to 2025 at low, medium and high variant growth rates

Years	Low Variant (2.0)	Medium Variant (2.5)	High Variant (3.0)
1991	1,911,596	1,911,596	1,911,596
1996	2,162,762	2,194,632	2,216,063
2001	2,446,967	2,519,575	2,569,025
2006	2,768,519	2,892,623	2,978,204
2011	3,132,325	3,320,920	3,452,555
2016	3,543,938	3,812,625	4,002,457
2021	4,009,640	4,257,911	4,639,945
2025	4,425,893	4,888,347	5,222,299

Table 2 shows the projections on the population of the State up to 2025. The projections on the population of the State up to the year 2025 AD show tremendous increases in total size (Table 2). The projections are based on a constant annual growth rate of 3.0 percent between 1991 and 2006 and thereafter on variables rates up to the end of 2025. These projections, though not necessarily predictions, have high analytic values in drawing attention to the reality of the future population situation in the State. Given the present general trend of rapid population increase in the population of Nigeria, the population of Cross River State is likely to exceed 5 million by 2025. Obviously, the size of population has implications for development in the State especially given the generally low level of per capita income, neglect of agriculture, the slow pace of industrialization and decayed infrastructure in the Nigerian society. The contention is a doubling of the population will certainly put pressure on existing facilities which are not even sufficient to cope with current population.

Table 3. Age structure of the population of Nigeria (%) as reported in the 1991 and 2006 censuses and for Cross River State in 2006

Age Group	Nigeria		Cross River State
	1991	2006	2006
0 – 4	16.1	16.1	12.9
5 – 6	16.3	14.3	13.3
10 – 14	12.6	11.5	12.0
15 – 19	10.5	10.6	11.5
20 – 24	8.6	9.6	10.2
25 – 29	8.2	8.7	8.9
30 – 34	6.6	6.7	6.8
35 – 39	4.7	5.2	5.6
40 – 44	4.3	4.6	5.0
45 – 49	2.7	3.3	3.8
50 – 54	2.9	3.0	3.4
55 – 59	1.3	1.5	1.6
60 – 64	1.9	1.7	1.9
65 – 69	0.9	0.8	0.9
70 – 74	1.0	1.0	0.9
75 – 79	0.4	0.4	0.4
80 – 84	0.5	0.5	0.5
85+	0.5	0.5	0.4
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	

Source: National Population Commission Nigeria, 1991, 2006 Population Censuses

The population situation is further discussed with the use of Table 3. The table shows the age structure of the

population of Nigeria for 1991 and 2006 as derived from the two censuses and for Cross River State for 2006. From the 1991 census figures the population age 0 – 14 constituted 45 percent of the total population but in 2006, the proportion was 41.8 percent. From the 2006 census figures the proportion of the population in the age group 0 – 14 is 38.2 percent for Cross River State (Table 3). Although the indication for the country and its constituent units is that of a “young” population, it is salutary to note the decline, though slight, between 1991 and 2006. It is a pointer to the future, the proportion of the population in the age group 15 – 64 was 51.7 in 1991, but in 2006 this increased to 54.9 percent. The figures yield age dependency ratio of 93.2 for 1991 and 82 for 2006, for the country. Comparative data for Cross River State show age dependency ratio of 70.4 for 2006. The Cross River State figure is in consonance with the general observation of the 2006 census which reports average age dependency ratio of 66.6 for the South-South geopolitical zone.

Given the observed 3.2 percent for Nigeria, and 3.1 percent for Cross River State, as the proportions of the population aged 65 years and above, the indication is that of a population with a high “youth” dependency ratio. A high youth dependency ratio has implication for high population growth rate. This observation is further demonstrated by the information in Table 4, which shows the age – sex structure of the population of Cross River State in 2006. Of particular note in Table 4 is the proportion of the population of the female population in Cross River State in the 15 – 49 age group, which is 53.9 of the total female population in the State. The proportion of women in the age group 15 – 49, is indicative of the proportion of women in the child-bearing age. The demographic import of focusing attention on the proportion of women in the reproductive age (15 – 49) is that it is a good indicator for estimating future population growths especially when combined with expected fertility patterns. The large number of women in the reproductive age group contributes substantially to the “population momentum”. It is inferred that if fertility rates remain high, as at present, (or even decline marginally), the observed phenomenon could result into high population growth in the coming decades. This eventually has implications for the size of the future population of the state. The implications of the observations made concerning the population of Cross River State are identified and discussed in the remaining part of the paper.

Table 4: Distribution of the population of Cross river state by five year age groups and sex (2006 census)

Age Groups	Both Sexes	Sex				
		%	Males	%	Females	%
Cross River						
0 – 4	0372,909	12.9	190,930	13.0	181,979	12.8
5 – 9	385,882	13.3	201,832	13.7	184,050	13.0
10 – 14	346,479	12.0	182,255	12.4	164,224	11.6
15 – 19	333,305	11.5	168,849	11.5	164,456	11.6
20 – 24	296,286	10.2	142,976	9.7	153,310	10.8
25 – 29	257,345	8.9	119,797	8.1	137,548	9.7
30 – 34	195,480	6.8	90,795	6.2	104,685	7.4
35 – 39	162,131	5.6	76,488	5.2	85,643	6.0
40 – 44	143,691	5.0	74,786	5.1	68,905	4.9
45 – 49	110,750	3.8	60,938	4.1	49,812	3.5
50 – 54	97,286	3.4	54,078	3.8	43,208	3.0
55 – 59	44,969	1.6	26,166	1.9	18,803	1.3
60 – 64	55,792	1.9	30,810	2.1	24,982	1.8
65 – 69	26,260	0.9	14,281	1.0	11,979	0.8
70 – 74	25,913	0.9	15,035	1.0	10,878	0.8
75 – 79	12,365	0.4	6,924	0.5	5,441	0.8
80 – 84	13,679	0.5	7,580	0.5	6,099	0.4
85+	12,466	0.4	7,447	0.5	5,019	0.4
Total	2,892,988		1,471,967		1,421,021	

Population Situation and Its Implications for Socio-Economic Development of Cross River State

The population question has been of some concern to demographers and development planners, but opinion seems to differ on the effects of population on economic development. The experience of some economies as Brazil is that population growth might after all have positive implications for aggregate economic growth (Merrick, 1976, Ottong, 1984 and Ering, 2005). Although this might be due to the rather peculiar socio-demographic path of the development process in Brazil, it has been observed that the effects could also be negative for other economies, as in the case of Cross River State. The discussion of the implication of the population situation on the socio-economic development of Cross River State has at its background in the poor economy of the state and the effects of population trends in the society for urban growth, labour force and the provision of such social services as education and health.

Urbanization

One of the main characteristics of the population situation in African society is the rather paradoxical fact of low degree of urbanization in the face of rapid urban population growth. The African continent generally is not a highly urbanized world region but the few large urban centres are experiencing phenomenal population growth with such cities as Cairo, Kinshasa, and Lagos growing at the rate of over 10 per cent per annum (ECA 1980). This point is supported by Preston (1979) when he concludes that the rate of change in the proportion of urban in developing countries is not exceptionally rapid by historical standards, but rather it is the growth rates of urban populations that represent

an unprecedented phenomenon. Ottong (1983) argues that although Cross River State is one of the least urbanized geo-cultural regions of Nigeria, the State is already faced with the problem of rapid population growth in the few urban centres. Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Ugep, Ogoja, Ikom and Obudu are experiencing very rapid population increase with the attendant problems of inadequate urban facilities and infrastructures to sustain large influx of people. Given moderate urban growth rates of between 2.8 and 3.0 per cent, projections based on the 1991 figures show that the urban population of the State is expected to double by the year, 2025. This shows large increase in the size of urban population in the State, although given the overall population increase the ratio of urban to rural population might not change significantly.

Observation has shown that the growth of urban population in Cross River State has been rather phenomenal. Thus, the annual rate of growth of urban population in the State might be within the United Nations 5 per cent average assumed for the African region generally, and most probably much higher for places like Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja. Obviously, increasing degree of urbanization, in the context of the proportion of population that live in towns and cities, is a measure of development in a society, but urban centres in the State lack the physical capacity and economic base to absorb sustained large population increases. It need not be over-emphasized that the problems of inadequate accommodation, poor housing, congestion, filth and general environmental deterioration, associated with the urban centres are functions of the stress of population on urban facilities and infrastructures. Presently, Calabar, the state capital has been given a befitting outlook and efforts have

been made to improve other urban centres in the State. Under the Donald Duke administration, policies of urban renewal and environmental sanitation have given few towns, particularly Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, Ugep, Ikom, Ogoja and Obudu, the semblance of new look. This vigour and momentum must be sustained by successive administration if change and lasting improvement are to be achieved. Indeed, effective urban planning and administration demand objectivity, foresightedness, appropriate technology and technological expertise, as well as judicious use of funds and other scarce resources vis a vis an articulate population policy. The population policy should include elements of control of migration in order to regulate the territorial "in" and "out" flow of population movements.

Education/Labour Force

The Cross River State is considered as one of the educationally disadvantaged States in Nigeria. Thus,

efforts have been directed by past administrations at restoring and improving schools and school facilities. Since the introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) by the Obasanjo administration, school enrolment has increased tremendously. In other words, school enrolment for primary schools as shown in Table 5 has been increasing. However, it has been known generally that primary school dropout with less than 4 years of schooling might not attain permanent literacy (UN 2002). And even those who have completed primary education, cannot be considered literate in the absolute sense especially given contemporary trends in the standard of education in Nigeria. On the part of the females who cannot further their education, the only option is marriage, and early marriage is positively associated with early childbirth, a phenomenon which intensifies the demographic features of large number of children and high population growth.

Table 5. Primary school enrolment, number of streams and number of classes by sex (2002-2005)

Year	No. of Streams	Primary I		Primary II		Primary III		Primary IV		Primary V		Primary VI		Total (per se)		Grand Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
2002	14,426	84,166	83,295	40,353	38,479	36,553	35,153	34,805	33,631	32,015	31,804	27,719	28,128	255,611	250,490	506,101
2003	17,284	47,597	46,934	46,257	45,308	45,474	45,445	42,411	41,999	37,881	37,256	32,863	32,606	296,635	292,759	589,124
2004	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2005	19,090	42,003	47,245	47,302	47,745	46,552	46,718	44,275	44,199	41,696	40,707	34,396	33,805	310,055	309,870	619,925

Source: Cross River State Statistical Year Book, 2005

*Data, not available.

For many years now in Nigeria, at both Federal and State levels, education has always been given top priority. Because of this policy, there has been a considerable increase in the number of educational institutions in the country and in Cross River State in recent years, especially in post primary institutions. However, despite these efforts, and the accompanying increases in primary and secondary school enrolments, the proportion of young persons who are not in school has not declined appreciably because of the effects of population growth on that sector of the population. The additions to the school age population are larger than can be absorbed in schools. Much of the effort so far made in the educational front is concentrated in trying to ascertain minimum education for the greatest number possible. Where this obtains, as is the case in the State, little is left for improving the quality of education in such ways as providing better quality teachers, better-equipped classrooms, and in investigating and introducing new teaching techniques that will ensure good quality outputs from the educational institutions.

There are many post primary institutions without adequate personnel, laboratories and other requisite facilities. The contention is that over 80 percent of community projects in Cross River State are in the areas of either opening new schools or building additional blocks of classrooms. Indeed, parents are

called upon in more ways than before to bear the burden of their children's education. The result is that development in other sectors of the economy are relatively, given low priority and starved of funds, and at times, completely abandoned. The investments in education are, no doubt, laudable because of expected future returns. But although much is being expended on education in the State, the quality of the labour force is still very low and high level manpower supply situation has not improved, educational investment is concentrated on the expansion at the lower levels of education. While there is a relatively high degree of unemployment in the State, many positions still remain unfilled because of lack of appropriately trained personnel. There is need to monitor the demographic processes to allow for lower growth rates, and effective educational planning.

Cross River Population Situation: Policy Options

Population is a vital factor in socio-economic development, but while it might be considered as an asset, it could be, as well, a liability, especially where it constitutes an impediment to rapid development. The analysis in this paper shows that the population of Cross River State is young and rapidly expanding, of low health status and of relatively poor quality in terms of skilled manpower. The economy of the state is relatively underdeveloped therefore, unable to cope effectively with the prevailing demographic features

and trends, resulting from high population growth rate. Since the demographic characteristics of the economy does not enhance accelerated development of high-level manpower; efforts are being made in the society to improve education, which is a catalyst to development. However, in an attempt to provide basic education to the greatest number possible, efforts in educational development are concentrated largely at the lower levels of education because of the large number of children, and young persons in the population. Given the scarce resources of the economy, relatively little is available for investment in other sectors of the economy to accelerate the pace of the much needed development.

Population projections based on the current and likely future growth patterns show that the picture is not too bright unless there are substantial reductions in net increases to the overall population. The achievement of such objective calls for a proper perception of the population phenomenon. It demands a wider view of the scope of, and strategy for socio-economic planning and the integration of the population factor into the development process. Clear and articulate population and health policies which aim at reducing the growth rate of the population, through proper harnessing of the vital processes should be adopted. In various development plans so far evolved in the country, particularly against the backdrop of Vision 20:2020, maternal/child health programmes including family planning have been adopted largely for health reasons. Such programmes should be widely publicized and vigorously pursued not only for their health import but more so for the demographic consequences, which is lowering of fertility level and hence reduction in population growth rate. This is in line with the UN medium variant projection of Total Fertility Rate (TFR). It argues for a steep fertility decline in many developing nations especially in Pakistan, Nigeria, Iran and India where the Total Fertility Rates are still far above the reproductive level of 2.1 children per woman (UN, 2006). Population movement in the society should be sufficiently monitored and channeled for redistribution through programmes of more even development.

CONCLUSION

The population situation of any society is an important factor in the socio-economic development of such a society. It is a vital part of the economic system and if not effectively managed could affect other sectors of the economy. The analysis of Cross River State population shows that, the population is characterized by high population growth rate which may affect the socio-economic wellbeing of the people; therefore measures must be taken to check this trend in the State. Some of these measures have been discussed in the paper. In conclusion, it is opined that rapid socio-economic development demands the exercise of

deliberate control over the demographic variables, because lack of control or Laissez-Faire attitude amounts to a gross neglect of an important development factor, and is prejudicial to effective development planning.

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