

An Appraisal of Nigerian Census and its Usefulness

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Abstract

This study presents an appraisal of Nigeria Census and its usefulness. Census exercise in Nigeria took place every ten years since 1866 to know and ascertain the number of people living together in the country for national planning and development. It plays an instrumental and vital role in improving and promoting the living condition of people, provides tremendous opportunities for economic growth, poverty reduction through job creation for the youths, human development, increase production and productivity among others. Furthermore, the 2006 census, the total population of Nigeria from 1952 census to date were discussed and presented graphically. It was discovered from the graphs that the population trend in Nigeria is increasing and rising since 1952 to date; and the percentage also varies. The recommendations were drawn based on the study.

KEYWORD: Economic Growth, National Planning, Population, Poverty, Trend

Introduction

Census is a complete enumeration of the entire people living either in a village, community, town, city, local government, state or country as a whole. Any country without statistics or data of the entire people living in the country cannot have proper planning and there wouldn't be development as such. In Nigeria, census began in

1866 during the colonial era before the independence in 1960 and it always takes place every ten years. Aluko, 1965; Olusanya, 1989; Abraham, 1999; Bamgbose, 2009, Iwuoha, 2017 and National Population Commission 2019 have deeply worked on censuses in Nigeria since inception.

Meanwhile, the exercise covered only southern part of the country including Lagos 1866 - 1931 with the exception of 1952 census exercise, which was done nationwide. Therefore, censuses which took place during the independence were within the year 1962 – 2006, others till date were estimated values.

National Population Commission projects on the post 2006 census as population increased annually/growth rate of about 3.2% in some of the states like Lagos, Kaduna and Kano, while some states have the least number of populations include Nassarawa, Ebonyi and Bayelsa respectively. Recently, Elaigwu and Garba 2015 and NBS 2018 stated and published in her bulletin that Nigeria has an overall population of about 193.3 million.

Censuses conducted are the only crucial and useful sources of statistical data for socio-economic, national and political planning and development, but it is so expensive and controversial. The national planning and development cannot be achieved with mere census/estimated counts no matter the types of human and material resources available, put in place and committed to such exercise (Mohammed *et al.*, 2019).

Okafor, 2015 also discussed in his work that Nigeria politicians used censuses as an instrument to get what they want. Although, there are a lot of controversies in the census results in many regions, states and societies in the area of sensitive issues such as religion, ethnicity and politics of constituencies and resource allocations (Idike and Eme, 2015). In this same vein, Sade Balogun 2018 wrote and it is quoted here

“Without gathering statistics or population data about the number of people living in a place at a particular period of time, it will be impossible and difficult to make plans and develop socio-cultural, economic, social and demographic changes. Also, it will be difficult to estimate the level of life people live in the country and make forecast about national planning and development and population growth. legit.ng”

Therefore, the rest of the paper is divided as follows: In section 2, we discuss on 2006 Nigerian population Census by states and present their population values graphically.

The usefulness of population Census is also discussed in section 3 and in section 4, conclusions and recommendations were drawn.

2006 Nigerian Population Census by States

The usefulness and importance of Statisticians in census exercise or gathering of census data cannot be overemphasized, especially in the areas like data collection/gathering of information, data processing, interpretation and presentation of result. Meanwhile, census coverage areas are as follows: education, household composition, demographic and social characteristics, migration, disability, economic activity, housing and amenities catalog (2019).

Furthermore, both the method and technology used in 2006 census is different from all other censuses that had taken place in Nigeria. Data were captured using Optical Mark Recognition (OMR), Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Intelligent Character recognition (ICR) to enhance the outcome (results) from the exercise in the year, unlike before where data or information from the census forms are key inn into the computer system(Catalog, 2019). In addition, information gathered from Nigeria Data Portal of National Bureau of Statistics, the total population in 2006 was 140,431,790; where total of male was 71,345,488, total of female was 69,086,302 and the total regular households was also 28,197,085. These values were given after the whole exercise that year; and breakdown of those values into total number of people in each state is presented graphically in Figure 1 below:

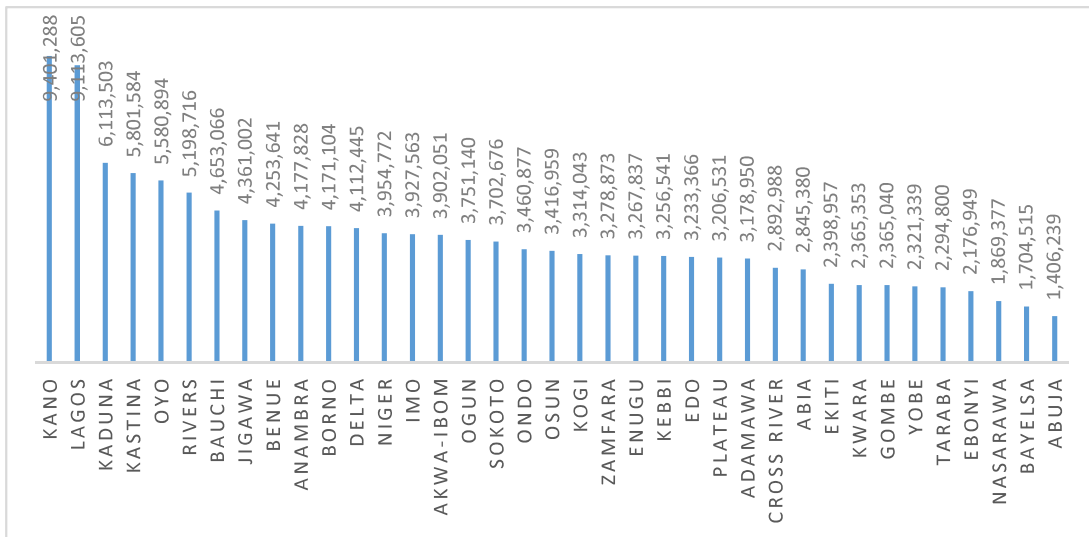


FIGURE 1: 2006 Nigerian Population Censuses by States
 Source: Nigeria Data Portal of National Bureau of statistics

Nigeria Population Plot (1952-2019) and Its Growth Rate

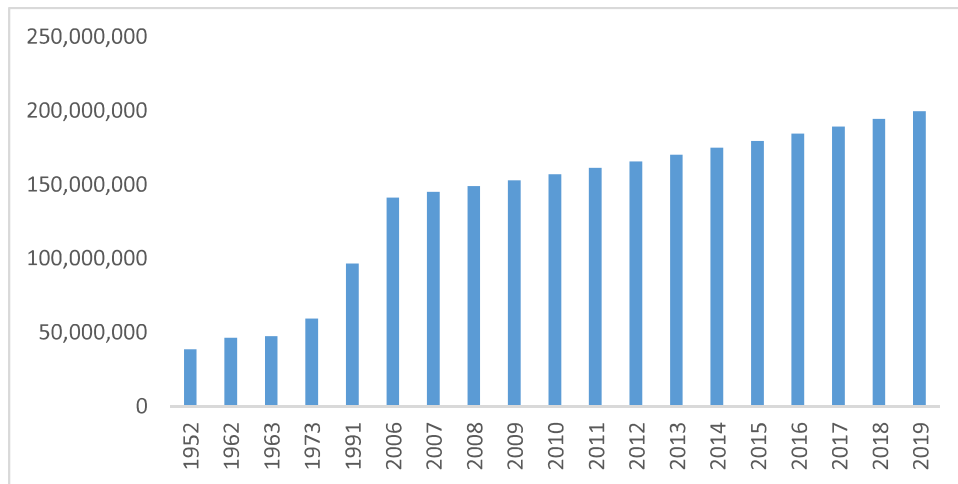


FIGURE 2: Nigerian Population (1952 – 2019)
 Source: *worldpopulationreview.com*

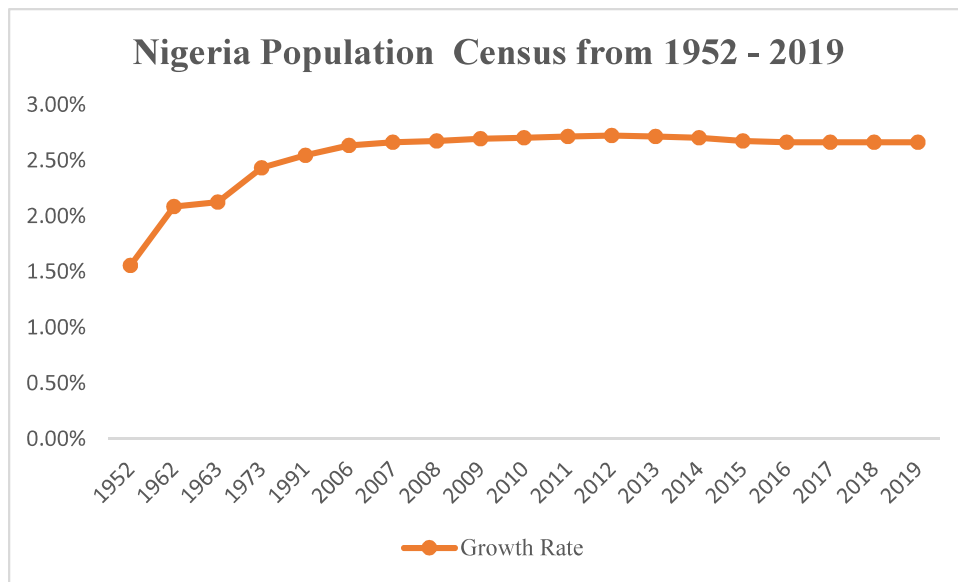


FIGURE 3: Growth Rate (1952 – 2019)

Source: *worldpopulationreview.com*

Rapid growth in population and civilization recently in the country is on the high side than it was in the time past. Therefore, figure 1 above contains 2006 Nigerian Population Census by states which represent with simple bar chart, each indicates the number of population for each state; as some states have largest population like Kano, Lagos and Kaduna, while some have the least number of populations such as Ebonyi, Nassarawa and Bayelsa including Abuja respectively. Although, Nigeria had complete enumeration from 1962 to 2006 and since then others were estimated values till date (2007 – 2019).

Figure 2 consist the bar chart of Nigerian population from 1952 to 2019 with its rapid growth and the growth rate in line chart is contain in figure 3. However, the growth rate is calculated by

$$GR = \left(\frac{Pr Po}{Pt Po} \right)^{1/n} - 1$$

where, GR is Growth rate, Pr Po is the number of Present/Current Population, Pt Po is the number of Past Population, n = the number of year and 1 is constant. Meanwhile, by 1962, the growth rate was 2.09% and rose to 2.13%, 2.44%, 2.55% and 2.65% in 1963, 1973, 1991 and 2006 respectively. The number of year used for the calculation of the growth rate between 1962 and 63 is 1 different from other years. This depends on the number of year(s) between the present and past year the census was conducted.

Furthermore, the growth rate from 2007 to 2019 was calculated based on $n = 2$ and the number of population for these years are estimated values, therefore there was annual increased in the growth rate from 2007 to 2013(2.67%, 2.68%, 2.70%, 2.71%, 2.72% and 2.73%), while by 2013 to 2019 Nigeria has annual decreased of 1%to the previous years (2.72%, 2.71%, 2.68%, 2.67%, 2.67%, 2.67%, and 2.67%)as reported respectively.

The Usefulness of Population Census

However, information on population is needed for national planning and development in the areas of decision and policy making by the government because population data represents an important substance of any country as it relates to planning and development. If Nigerian government can remove population rivalry especially for political manipulation between tribes, ethnicity, religion respectively (Mohammed *et al.*, 2019).This is simply because census surrounded with a lot of benefits to the nation and citizenry if properly handled with seriousness and sincerity. Census is more than just determining the number of people in a specific area at a particular time, but can help government to develop and formulate a robust economic policy for the country. Although, these purposes include, but not limited to the following reasons which are to:

- (a) Determine how to allocate resources to many federal funded programmes like: food security, security of life and properties, health, education, Agricultural development, highway rehabilitation planning and construction etc.
- (b) Determine legislative districts and accurate representation in the National assembly for example, the number of elected officials from each state and selection of political appointees by federal government.

- (c) Determine the population density: This refers to as the detailed statistics with high and low density of population resource distribution or allocation of government resources.
- (d) Serve as support from government and international agencies in helping the country.
- (e) Source of information for all groups (ethnic) and stakeholders: Accurate census counts will yield perfect decision making in planning and development.
- (f) Formulating Economic policies for instance, sharing of revenue formula and allocation of resources can be based on population figures.
- (g) Employment opportunities, control, rate of unemployment and standard of living of the citizens in the country could easily be known by the government through population data.
- (h) Provision of social amenities: This will allow government to know the number of people in a particular area, local government, state, region at a given time and also enable the government to provide adequate social amenities based on their population. (Peter, *et al.*, 2013)
- (i) Data products and projections throughout the decade: the census data always makes provision for future planning and development in all areas/levels in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

In view of the above discussions about conducts of Censuses, population Census in Nigeria supposed to have yielded tremendous and remarkable development in all areas include food security, security of life and properties, health, education, Agricultural development, highway rehabilitation planning and construction, allocation of elected political seats, Economic policies, employment opportunities, control, reduce rate of unemployment and standard of living of the citizens, yield perfect decision making in planning and development, Provision of social amenities among others but reverse is the case.

Hence, Mohammed *et al.*(2019) pointed out some challenges which Census exercise encountered in Nigeria like the issue of political rivalry that is still persists, especially political manipulation between the North and South-East; and possible political manipulation by politicians in anticipation of political constituencies, creations and revenue allocation. The problems of logistics and manpower which may be affected by Nigerian factor of shortcuts and fire brigade approach in handling matters. Meanwhile, another Census exercise has not being conducted since 2006. Could it be the government does not find the relevance of the Census in their decision making? The answer is not far- fetched, it may be due to the level of corruption in the country and the fact that a lot of human and material resources and logistics are required for the exercise. Adequate funding and proper management may be another challenge in view of the level of corruption and short of funds.

Census counts are of a great value when it comes to the issue of National planning and development in any country. Census should be a planning, development and eye opener instrument in the hands of government, because it allows government to know the statistics of the nation in all levels e.g local government, state and nation at large. According to figures one to three above, population of each state and each year for the whole nation till 2019 were depicted. Therefore, there is need for government to conduct fresh Census exercise (complete enumeration) in no distant time to enhance national planning and development because the benefits that Census will bring is far greater than the costs in conducting it; projection/estimated values cannot do the country any good in terms of planning and development rather it will continue to worsen the situation.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn based on the findings and studies conducted:

- Nigeria government should see census data as one of the determining factors for tenet of democracy in the country.
- Government should go back to the proper census exercise and stop using ordinary estimated value they had embarked on since the last head counts

they had in 2006. They should adhere to ten years interval in conducting census in the country.

- Population data should be considered during any national planning and development
- Adequate sensitization, awareness, advertisement on the importance of census exercise should be done often in preparation for the next census counts.
- National Population Commission should re-train their staff on how to handle and use new technologies like: satellite, imagery machine, readable forms and other ICT devices used in conducting Census. (Peter, *et al.*, 2013).
- Government should empower the National population Commission at all levels by given them adequate and accurate equipment to conduct credible and accurate census.

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