

Census in Nigeria: The Processes, Politicization and Implications from Coloniality to Post-Coloniality

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04931>

Published July 19, 2025

Citation: Okoko C.O. and Okoroafor C.A. (2025) Census in Nigeria: The Processes, Politicization and Implications from Coloniality to Post-Coloniality, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*,6(4)16-32

Abstract: *The importance of census undertakings since independence paled into insignificance as a result of the wrangling that pervaded the activities of the disparate agglomerating ethnic units in Nigeria. This was in addition to government's unpreparedness that was exacerbated by low capital and human capacity deficits. Yet, census was relevant since it provided the benchmark for the generation of social, economic and political data that, in turn, made for effective and efficient planning and programming. This paper examined census undertakings nexus how effectively and successfully Nigeria's National Population Commission (NPC) conducted headcounts in the country; the problems encountered; and the often non-compliance by ethnic and dissident groups in not allowing their members participate in them. It assessed the implications of these problems vis-à-vis economic planning, growth and development. The paper concluded that the inability of the NPC to conduct censuses and the often non-compliance of ethnic groups, militants and secessionists, affected Nigeria's overall growth and development. Primary and secondary sources were used in writing this paper while internet sources served complementary and subsidiary purposes.*

Keywords: census, population, data, growth, commission, planning and development.

INTRODUCTION

The writing of this paper has been spurred by the intention of the Federal government of Nigeria to conduct a census in 2023; and to appraise its preparedness compared to previous ones. This is against the background rehearsed by E. O. Frank (2010: 77) that:

- i. Of the controversies which always pervaded censuses in Nigeria;
- ii. Of the rationale for the ever-present contests for high population numbers in Nigeria;
- iii. That the struggle for numbers is not unconnected to the political and fiscal expediencies which censuses confer on majority ethnic groups; and
- iv. The privileges censuses imbue on the citizenry vis-à-vis the provision of public goods and services by the State.

Census could be variously defined, namely, numeration of people, their enumeration, counting, figuring, summation and computing, among others. These processes are intended to produce tables of populations of peoples, averages, modes, significance and mean averages. In the processes of developing funding parameters for resource allocation, management, planning and maximum utilization of revenues, census is used to establish standards, standard error, a distribution curve, progression and regression, and correlations, thereby, creating room for statistical enquiry and market research. Census, again, creates room for demographic analysis vis-à-vis birth and death rates, vital statistics, price index and cost of living index. In demographic analysis, it enables the creation of histograms, pie-chart, flow-chart and plans of events nexus populations (Betty Kirkpatrick, 1987: 47-48).

Population statistics or demographic statistics (numerical data) is required for adequate demographic analysis as *raison d'être* for development planning in any country or region (Ibe Samuel Onwuchekwa, G. N. Chima and D. S. Okoroigwe, 2010: 29). Census statistics are intended to portray absolute demographic numbers, the distribution and densities of population per space of territory, State or country. For utmost consideration in census statistics are certain characteristics which include:

- i. Physical characteristics which include age, sex and others such as height, weight and colour;
- ii. Economic characteristics which include occupation, income, consumption and levels of living, needs, expectations, economic decisions and actions;
- iii. Social characteristics which include marital status, household, radiance, education, religion, language, nationality, ethnicity, fear and beliefs; and
- iv. Population dynamics which include fertility, mortality, migrations and the nature of change that result from demographic processes.⁴

Census exercises are needed to provide basic information on the state of a country's population at any given time and place. Rehearsing Onwuchekwa, *et al*, census assesses the size, character and processes of demographic trends nexus population growth, decline and/or stability, dynamics, structure and patterns of movement.⁵ Other vital relationships and questions often asked and given as reasons for an adequately needed population census and which are of utmost importance to development planners are:

- i. Population distribution and internal migrations;
- ii. Manpower needs and availability;
- iii. Population (inclusive of size, growth and structure) and educational needs;
- iv. Population and health conditions, health facilities and services;
- v. Population needs for housing and foods security; and
- vi. Population level of living and socio-cultural development (Onwuchekwa, Chima and Okoroigwe, 30).

Technically, census provides vital data for planning. To all intents and purposes, when the population of a nation is properly estimated, resource wastages, losses or damages are stemmed. Generally, certain reasons for engaging in headcounts have been adduced to include:

- i. That census is needful to provide information that would be useful in instituting programmes that will improve health, literacy, education, income, levels of living, supplies of foods and other consumer goods, agricultural production and industrial output;
- ii. The determination of the representativeness of legislative bodies, the number of persons eligible to vote, and the areas or groups that have a claim to benefits deriving from the State;
- iii. Lending the basis for demographic, economic and social research; and enables the identification and description of groups such as labour, economically dependent persons, recent migrants to cities, rural and urban populations, racial or religious minorities and refugees, among others;
1. Provides information which give the template or frame from which samples are selected for subsequent inquiries (C. Taeuber and I. B. Taeuber, 1958: 361);
- iv. Provides data for government on the number, distribution, problems and needs of disabled persons or special citizens;
- v. Informs government on the fertility level of the population as an indicator for population growth;
- vi. Informs on the proportion of the population that is engaged in active economically productive employment at the time of the census;
- vii. Supplies information on the status of the labour force of both employed and unemployed;
- viii. Of the major economic activities of the population, on the overall thrust of the economy; and
- v. Of persons that are economically active in both the formal and informal sectors of Nigeria's economy (Frank, 2010: 80-81).

Census undertakings are:

- i. Not carried out haphazardly but must have national sponsorship since, unarguably, only a national government can provide the resources for this exercise;
- ii. That it must cover a precisely defined territory;
- iii. That boundary changes that could affect comparisons between successive censuses should be clearly stated;
- iv. That it must include all persons within the scope of the census without duplication or omission;
- v. That it must take place at a fixed time frame. Persons born after the census date are excluded. Even pregnant women are counted as individuals exclusive of the unborn; and
- vi. A census is not completed until the data are compiled and published.

The recommended sets of modes for national population census are the location at the time of the census; place of usual residence, relation to the head of household or family, sex, age, marital status, place of birth, citizenship, whether economically active or not, occupation, industry, status (as employer or employee etc), language, ethnic group, nationality characteristics, literacy, level of education, school attendance, and the number of children born to each woman (inclusive of polygamous homes). Finally, in rehearse of the United Nations Statistical Office (No. 27, 1958), a successful census is contingent upon availability of tools among which are:

- i. Well-structured questionnaires;
- ii. Recruitment and training of both permanent and ad-hoc staff; and
- iii. Enumeration of area demarcation and the adoption of de facto method of enumeration and vehicular facilities.

Census Exercise in Nigeria

In addition to bad governance and obvious corrupt practices, inaccurate estimates (at times done deliberately) by population estimators have had negative correlations with development (Mkpa Agu Mkpa, 2008: vii). These negative correlations which are inclusive of geographical barriers, however, are daily being ameliorated by improving transportation facilities and telecommunications. Rehearsing Mkpa (2008: viii) on the geographical barrier factor, it is the responsibility of government to always sensitize the citizenry on issues of policy that could be ambiguous to them. For instance, situations where States with vast expanses of uninhabited land mass are allotted the highest annual growth rates are usually difficult to understand. This has made interested Nigerians to interpret the actions of policy makers vis-à-vis these allotments as intended to bolster the population numbers of undeserving territorial patches. Presently, the numbers of people who live in Nigeria are not known.

At every census undertaking, Nigeria has always been confronted by the same challenges. Other than being at the whims and caprices of estimators and demographics, are the activities of ethnically-motivated politicians who insist that the larger the expanse of land, the more people that will inhabit it. Lagos State does not have as much land mass as Adamawa State, yet, what are the population of the two? Another problem is that of rural-urban migration, whereby, about 35% of able-bodied persons, mostly youths from Igboland live in the well-established and larger urban centres, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt and Kano. Thus, it becomes impossible to have accurate population figures of States, such as Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo at any given time.

Censuses in Nigeria until 2006 have been fraught with under-enumeration or under-counting on the one hand, and over-enumeration or over-counting, on the other. Unarguably, political and resource allocation considerations have underpinned these exercises in Nigeria. In the words of Stella Ogbuagu (2010, 4):

The official report of Nigeria's 1991 census was handed in on February 27, 1997 That census, which was generally viewed as under-enumerated, gave Nigeria a total population of 88,992,220 comprising 44,529,608 males (50.04%) and 44,462,612 females (49.96%) with an implied annual growth rate of 1.6 per year within the elongated period of 1963 and 1991 This meant that the males were in excess of females by a narrow margin of 0.04%.

There was speculated under-counting as some other estimates had put the Nigerian population at 120 million (pre-census estimate based on the 1963 census of 56 million) and 110 million (pre-census estimate by the World Bank). Worthy of note is the difference between the estimated population figure of 16.05 Million in 1911 and the disputed census figure

of 88.9 million of 1991.¹² The growth rate is not only remarkable but can be regarded as phenomenal. It is relevantly observed that both the populations of 1911 and 1991 respectively occupied and still occupy the same geographical space (of 923,768 square kilometers or 356,667 square miles) with varied physical, vegetation and climatic types.

These censuses have portrayed accelerated population growth rates that, in turn, brought to the fore diverse and variegated concerns; and symptomized by space and resource allocation that are by extension inclusive of:

- i. Population density in a limited territorial space;
- ii. The movement of people within and withal territorial delineations;
- iii. The engagement of people in gainful activities, reproduction or regeneration of the species; and
- iv. Organizing individual and group interrelations, protecting lives and property; and the environment.

Thus, the survival of humanity has had to depend on the growth of human population nexus its implications and fallouts within territorial limits. Consequently, the sumtotal of Nigeria's policy on population is to improve the quality of life and standard of living of the citizens. Censuses, *ipso facto*, would always be relevant and needful in generating the benchmark, as mentioned earlier, for social, economic and political data that will make for effective and efficient planning and programming (Ogbuagu, 5-7).

Past Census Experiences and Future Considerations

The first census in Nigeria was conducted in 1866 in the Lagos Colony that came into existence in 1861. The second was in 1881 from which time, according to British tradition, marked the beginning of census undertakings in Nigeria decennially (P. K. Makinwa, 1985: 15). Other than the census of 1886, censuses became conducted every 10 years in the Lagos Colony in 1881, 1891 and 1901, respectively. Census was conducted outside the Lagos Colony in 1911 after its merger with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906 (S. A. Aluko, 1965: 371-392).

The first decennial census outside Lagos was conducted on April 2, 1911 which produced the population figures of 8,110,631 and 7, 858,689 for Northern and Southern Nigeria, respectively, sumtotalling to 15, 969,320 as the population of Nigeria in 1911 (John C. Caldwell and C. A. Okonjo, 1968). However, these were merely rough estimates by sex (C. K. Meek, 1969).

The second decennial census which involved the whole of Nigeria in 1921 was conducted in two prongs. The first was restricted to townships conducted in one day while the second was conducted in Provincial areas for over a period of two months from March to May 1921. It showed an advancement over the census of 1911 as real enumeration was conducted to supplement and update tax records taking into consideration the indices of ethnicity, occupation, language, religion and education. Additionally, both adult and non-adult populations were enumerated. Thus, the population of the North (at 9,994,515) and the South (at 8,368,512) in addition to that of the Trust Territory of Northern Camerouns (put at 261,663) totaled 18,624,690 persons (Tukur Dahiru, 2010: 107-108).

The 1931 census was a resort to the modalities adopted in pre-1911 censuses where tax records were used to compile figures. There was no census exercise in 1941 because of the Second World War. The importance of census taking became more appreciated to the extent that in planning the 1952 census, an independent organization was established. It was established on the realization that an intensive census exercise that would entail an enumeration of all Nigerians had become needful. Starting in 1950 and extended to August 1953, different parts of Nigeria were enumerated at equally different times which lacking in simultaneity greatly affected its veracity and usefulness as a source of demographic data.

Table I: 1950 to 1953 Census

Date	Area	Population
1950-1951	Lagos	272,000
1952 (May, July)	North	16,840,000
1952-1953 (Dec. 15-Jan. 53)	Western/Midwestern	6,087,000
1953 (May, June, August)	Eastern	7,218,000
Total		31,500,000

Source: C. A. Meek, The Northern Tribes of Nigeria, Vol. II, 1969

The 1952 to 1953 censuses which held nationwide were marred by manpower deficit. It was impossible to get literate persons of the levels of supervisors and enumerators who would have constituted the critical manpower needed for a national project as census. It was observed in 1952 that in Northern Nigeria, only about 250,707 of the population was literate or put more appropriately, could read and write. This then required the drafting of supervisors and enumerators from the other regions that had more educated persons. According Tukur Dahiru (2010: 108-109):

An alternative was to use literates from the South but because of intense antipathy and suspicion against the Southerners, they could not be deployed. It was feared [by the Northerners] that Southerners recruited as enumerators or supervisors could under-report the actual population of the North so that the South could have numerical advantage that they persistently claimed.

Other than mistrust and suspicion were the factors of superstition and religion. A major obstacle to head counts was superstition which was, and still is, not peculiar to Nigeria but to traditional societies some of which could be found outside Africa. Belief systems and values affected the conduct and final statistics emanating from censuses (J. E. Goldthorpe, 1952: 3-9). It was the belief in traditional African societies and religions that people should not present themselves to be counted since it would bring ill-luck, famine or other misfortunes (I. I. Ekannem, 1972). Additionally, people were suspicious of the intent of the modern democratic government as it was contrived that the purpose of census was to spy on their property, mode of life and, consequent on the Second World War, for the conscription of people into the British army.

In fairness to the events in Northern Nigeria, the issue of the requirements of religion and spirituality has always been overlooked nexus numbers and headcounts. The possible over-estimation and declaration of numbers after censuses notwithstanding, it is a fact that Islam prescribes marrying four wives for adherents as part fulfillment of requirements for membership. In spite of the existence of non-Muslims in northern Nigeria, the average size of a family unit would be 21 (inclusive of four wives, the man and 16 children). Resultantly, inclusive of the expansive landmass of the North, it became difficult for Southerners to accept declared results as truthful. Must every northern family with four wives have 16 children? Have censuses been politicized and over-enumerated? The North has become synonymous with the polygamous and religiously faithful to the tenets of Islam unlike Southern polygamists who are obvious traditionalists and un-Christians.

The problems that have been stated bedeviled censuses in Nigeria before and since independence in 1960. However, the post-independence period witnessed overhauls and sensitization in census-taking programmes. Pre-census campaigns were undertaken in order to create awareness and canvass cooperation from the citizens. Rehearsing S. A. Aluko (1965: 371-392), the emphasis during the census awareness campaigns informed Nigerians in both urban and rural areas that there were more to censuses other than knowing the number of Nigerians who are old enough for taxation and for enlistment into the army. The utility purposes of censuses, such as providing the data base for the provision of social services to rural areas, legislative representation of constituencies, location of industries, schools and health facilities, among others, were now emphasized.

Smarting from gaining independence from the British colonialists, it was the wish of government and the people of Nigeria to have, at least, an updated and more accurate demographic information. In spite of the hostility and withdrawals that characterized the 1962 census for instance, there was active participation of, and noticeable overzealousness by, the people. This stemmed from the awareness programmes of government which emphasized what the people stood to gain from participation. To quote Tukur Dahiru (2010: 109):

The emphasis placed on infrastructural development as well as legislative representation resulted in people migrating from their places of ... work to their [ethnic] villages ... to be counted there so that the population of their villages ... appreciates while at the same time depopulating their places of work. Additionally, many people made sure that they not only counted but at least counted twice.

Generally, at every census taking, there have always cropped up more controversial factors. The 1962 census, for instance, was made incredible because:

- i. Of over-inflation of population figures contained in the part report that was released by the Federal Census Officer and declared in the Parliament by the Minister of Economic Development that the figures for the five (5) Divisions of Awka, Brass, Degema, Eket and Opobo with over 100 and 120 percent were overinflated, therefore, false. That of the 62 census districts in Western Nigeria, only the results of five districts were released; and Southern politicians cried foul because the Minister was quiet regarding Northern Nigerian figures (Parliamentary Debates, August 1962);

- ii. The Federal government had suspended the Regional cabinet in the middle of the census exercise making the people apathetic and uncooperative with the federal agencies in-charge of the census exercise (Aluko, 1965, 371-392);
- iii. There were discrepancies in timing the census of 1962 to the extent that by November of the same year, enumeration still continued in the Gboko Division of Northern Nigeria. An official of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) said this was so because “census migration”. Some persons of Eastern Nigeria had travelled in order to be counted in their ethnic bases; and on return to their places of residence in Nigeria had to be counted again (Dahiru, 2010: 110);
- iv. An administrative officer from Eastern Nigeria, in order to justify, perhaps, over-inflated figures claimed that a new village with over 20,000 persons had been discovered (R. K. Udoh, 1968); and
- v. There were, as contended, the premeditated delay in the release of the provisional results of the 1962 census. The results consequent on the delays were assumed to have been tampered with as the commentaries in major newspapers ran.

The 1962 census was fraught with irregularities and rejected; and necessitated the 1963 recount. Consequently, and in order to improve on the 1962 census, a Central Census Board headed by the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Ahmadu Bello was established. It was agreed that enumerators will be swapped between the Regions in addition to the invitation of impartial supervisors from the United Nations Organization as observers. This was viewed with misgiving by many commentators since Nigeria just earned independence. The opinion was that this would portray Nigeria as incapable of conducting a basic exercise as a census. However, the census was conducted between the 5th and 8th November 1963, and the population of Nigeria was declared as 55,670,052.

Table II: Regional Population Figures in 1963

Region	Population
Northern Region	29,808,659
Eastern Region	12,394,462
Western region	10,265,846
Midwestern Region	2,535,839
Lagos	675,000
Total	55,670,052

Source: Tukur Dahiru, 2010, 111

In spite of having shortfalls as that of 1962, the result of the 1963 census was released in February 1964 and accepted as credible by the National Economic Council in May of the same year. The Eastern and Midwestern Regions rejected the result describing it as inflated to the advantage of the Northern Region which as construed has always intended to sustain its dominance, both in numbers and politically, over others. Although the other Regions, inclusive of the Midwestern, the Eastern Region went to the Supreme

court but lost consequent on the 6.0% “outrageous” growth in a comparative to the 1952/1953 census which the United Nations Division of Population had put at 46.3 million (United Nations, 1966).

Regarding the 1952/1953 censuses, that of 1962/1963 portrayed a dramatic attitudinal change of Nigerians from passivity, nonchalance and withdrawal. This no doubt was predicated on the public enlightenment programmes embarked by government, on the one hand, and on the peoples’ proactiveness, enthusiasm and obvious overzealousness, on the other. The latter factors were hijacked by the politicians to their advantage and to the disadvantage of Nigerians.

Prevalently, censuses became enamoured with charges and counter-charges of deliberate falsifications of data perpetrated in order to gain economic, political and/or ethnic advantages and ascendancy. The 1973 census that was conducted by the military government under General Yakubu Gowon between November 25 and December 2, 1973 was equally flawed especially when the result showed a negative growth rate in comparison to that of 1963. Having just emerged from a gruesome civil war, general Gowon did not hesitate to cancel the census vis-à-vis the politics of numbers that always played virulent parts in census discourses and in the creation of tension. The decennial census gap was broken in 1983 when the Military released a plan in 1986 for a census that will be conducted in 1991; and was backed by the Decree No. 23 of 1989 which also established the National Population Commission (NPC). Expunging the problematic issues of ethnic group, language and religion from the census questionnaire form, the headcount took place in November 1991. In the words of S. D. Makama (2005):

The 1991 census was the first ... in Nigeria that addressed comprehensively the data needs of the country. The census figures were not only accurate and reliable [comparatively with previous ones] but detailed in terms of explaining the composition and characteristics of Nigeria’s population by providing useful demographic and socio-economic data for design, implementation and evaluation of development programmes. Many policy relevant monographs were produced from the [1991] census data.

Although officially received after six years in 1997, the 1991 census which put the population of Nigeria at 88,514,501 in spite of skepticisms had certain factors work in its favour to avoid bickerings. There was a change in Nigeria’s power structure from the Parliamentary to the Presidential which devolved political powers away from the Regions to the States and Local Government Councils/Areas. This structural change laid the basis for the nature and scope of the controversies that characterized the 2006 census which was earlier scheduled for 2005. After a four-year plan with detailed logistics, budget, monitoring and devaluation plans, the census took place in March 2006. All heads of tiers of government (State Governors, Local Government Chairmen and Councilors) participated in the enlightenment of citizens. Some States, such as Lagos, gave a work-free week to allow civil servants to be counted. Census migration was de-emphasized and was actually minimal or absent. The 2006 census which put the population of Nigeria at 140,003,543 with more males (57.2%) than females (42.8%) was adopted and gazetted on January 19, 2007 with the annual growth rate of 3.2 percent over the 1991 census figure (Dahiru, 2010: 113).

Politics of Headcounts and Struggle for Numbers in Nigeria

All headcounts in Nigeria have been contentious, more especially the 1962 census which put the population at 42.5 million and not the 55.6 million that was considered from many quarters as having been manipulated and, yet, accepted by government. The United Nations Population Division had put it at 46.3 million (United Nations, 1966). In the 1973 census too, the original figure of 55.3 million and not the padded 75.6 million would have been released by government had the Murtala-Obasanjo military-led administration not cancelled it in 1975.

Population growth and census issues have been political and speculative. There has ever since, especially between 1960 and 2006, been a statistical lacuna. It cannot be said how many Nigerians there are. The reasons for conducting censuses are for socio-economic development and administration. These developments are provided with finances which must in turn be derived from the populace through taxation and many other means of public finance. Government ought to use the population data and statistics towards generating estimated resources/revenues.

The reasons for censuses, when it became common knowledge to Nigerians necessitated the struggle and, oftentimes, the faking of numbers.

Revenue Allocation (Sharing) in Nigeria

Between 2010 and 2020, Nigeria's population was expected to gain 54.1 million growing at the rate of 3.2% which if sustained, adhered to and applied, the urbanization and age structures of the population would change dramatically in turn altering education, retirement, healthcare and savings decisions. Rehearsing Ukeje (2010, 53):

The growing population is ... expected to exert pressure on food, available infrastructure, employment and ... public revenues. The ... increasing and stronger energy prices, which are driving users of fossil oil to look for substitutes means that the future sources of public wealth in Nigeria, could be in jeopardy since fossil oil is the main source of revenue to the nation. And a growing population that mostly depends on oil revenue faces a potential economic threat, especially where the resources are not efficiently managed.

Put differently, the allocation and spending of revenues in Nigeria, therefore, have strong political and ethnic undertones, real or orchestrated; its impact on the nation's growing population could be quite substantial. Thus, there will be the need for continuous policy adjustments alongside population changes and fiscal growth. Similarly, John Bongaart (1996: 483) examined if food production can keep pace with the demand for improved diets for a rapidly growing and modernizing (through education) world population. A comparative of the prospects for improved diet vis-à-vis increasing population and the stress on the environment taken into consideration, obvious difficulties would be encountered in expanding agricultural land, water supply and crop yields; and in pest control.

Revenue sharing arrangements and grants are intergovernmental statutory transfers which are enshrined in a country's constitution. These have been fashioned and streamlined by the activities of the Commissions that have been set up by colonial to post-colonial governments in Nigeria, especially between 1954 and 1989 when a permanent commission known as the National Revenue Allocation and Fiscal Commission (NRMAFC) was established. The ad hoc Commissions that have been set up from coloniality include: (i). The Risan Commission, 1957; (ii) The Binns Commission, 1964; (iii) The Dina Commission, 1968; (iv) The Aboyade Technical Committee, 1977; and (v) The Okigbo Commission, 1980 (S. D. Alade, J. O. Ebajemito, S. C. Rapu and M. Tule, 2003: 29).

Generally, statutory revenue sharing is a way of ensuring equity in incomes across local governments, on the one hand and for the Federal government to ably control fiscal policy making and adjustments, and in avoiding excessive and wasteful use of idle allocation, on the other.

The main objective in setting up Commissions/Committees has been in order to reduce the observed disparities between the Federal government and the other tiers of government in public revenue sharing. At the commencement of the Local Government Reforms in 1976, revenue sharing was considered at two levels between the Federal, State and Local Governments (as vertical revenue sharing); and State and Local Government (as horizontal revenue sharing). Direct allocations were made to States, Local Government Councils and Special Funds. The provision of Special Funds is made to cover the expenses in the administration of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), derivation issues and the development of mineral (hydrocarbon) producing areas, general ecology and statutory stabilization. Between 1980 and 2001, revenues were shared based on the principles and weights of equality of States/Local Government Councils (at 40%), population (at 30%), social development factor (at 10%), landmass/terrain (at 19%) and internal revenue effort (at 10%) (Ukeje, 2010: 53-61).

The shoddy handling of census enumeration, glaringly, has been as a result of the fact that population accounts for only 30% of revenue sharing allocation; and plays an insignificant role, therefore, in the vertical distribution of revenue in Nigeria. As far as macroeconomic governance is concerned, the Federal government of Nigeria has not made concerted effort, except oftentimes, lipservice, to address issues of growth in population vis-à-vis the growth of cities as a result of migrations from the rural areas and revenue sharing. Even at 5% growth in urbanization, Nigeria is one of the highest in the world and continues to grow. Concomitant to increasing population and rural-urban migrations are the pressures on the transportation system, housing, air pollution, waste management and poverty; and, in fact, on infrastructure (NEEDS, 2005). According to Ukeje (2010: 61):

Population changes, especially in urbanization, seem to be a missing link in Nigeria's fiscal revenue sharing [and] economic growth. So far, revenues have been shared without significant concern about the growth of urban population and its challenges. The three tiers of government receive their resource allocation based on the general criteria defined by the constitution, far from the reality of the burden of population growth which manifests in urban growth.

The 30% per population allocation policy did not include a forecast of population shift/growth in unprepared cities, such as Lagos, Port Harcourt and Enugu, among others. Lagos, for instance, played host to about 29,000 visitors daily in a 1989 survey and more presently (2023), out of which only 14,000 are in transit while more than 10,000 persons pitch tents (Newswatch, May 1989). These cities did not and, still do not, have appropriate urban planning strategies with resultant slums (informal settlements) wherein crimes are committed, desperation and urban gangs exist, and drugs are done. 80% of urban dwellers in Nigeria live in slums (UN-HABITAT, “Global Observatory Data Base”, 2005). Federal, State and Local Government Councils lack the ability to preempt the development of slums since they cannot immediately provide space, shelter, electricity, water and other services for the rapidly migrating low-income Nigerians. These migrants are often non-indigenes who could be neglected in spite of the fact that they are a ready source of cheap labour and taxes for home governments. Preventing slums from developing is much more cost-effective than upgrading or relocating them.

Whether the population increased or decreased, it has always affected the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in Nigeria. However, a declining demographic growth rate affects more the annual GDP growth. Additionally, an aging population affects government’s expenditure. Thus, the bulk of increases in public spending will be geared towards pensions, education, healthcare and long-term care. More importantly, aging-related costs represent latent but certain liabilities to the State since it is the main employer and provider of social services. Consequently, the share of public spending that is related to population growth must be increased relative to the Gross Domestic Product.

Policy Adjustments

The fiscal challenges arising from population growth and possible adjustments must remain high on the list of policy priorities in Nigeria. The priority should no longer be who should be in charge of, or granted, the larger share of revenue, Federal, States or Local Councils, but that whatever decisions are made, the basic principle of fiscal federalism must be clarified; and the separation of functions which is needful for greater accountability and good governance must be maintained (Ukeje, 2010: 66).

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in a survey showed that about N3.4 trillion was spent by the 740 Local Government Councils in Nigeria in the last 10 years with nothing spent on infrastructural development that would have enhanced the well-being of the people. Other than corruption which has been the bane of development and growth in Nigeria, revenue should be shared in such a way that it ensures that Local Councils and States would be able to provide services of acceptable quality to the people.

The searchlight of policy adjustments should be directed on urbanization. Urban centres have grown as a result of migration influxes, through existing population growth and through the reclassification of the population of rural areas as urban. Policy makers, it has often been suggested, should reclassify highly populated areas as urban and rebalance resource allocations and fiscal practices in order to accommodate them in the overall infrastructure planning and provision of adequate services. This policy has the potential to decongest the highly populated cities and stem the tide of influxes of people to them. This would in the

short and long runs rebalance rural-urban population and enhance economic growth and well-being of citizens.

Census provides demographic data in any country for national socio-economic and political planning. This means that the quality of any national planning depends on the quality of its source data derivable from a high quality census.

Census exercises in Nigeria began in 1886 in the Lagos Colony sequel to the 1863 Census Ordinance by the British; wherein all the censuses between 1886 and 1901 took place. But by 1911, the Lagos Colony became amalgamated to the Southern Protectorate; and by 1914, to the Northern Protectorate to form the present territorial patch referred to as Nigeria. The 1921 census involving the whole country was the first national census and was conducted by Amaury Talbot, a Briton.

The census exercises between 1950 and August 1953 lacked simultaneity as it were conducted in the various regions at different times. The inadequacies associated with the censuses were as a result of inadequate European manpower and training of local enumerators. Additionally, and glaringly too, were poor financing of the processes, public (ethnic or regional) attitudes and apathy to censuses.

The first simultaneous census was that of May 3-27, 1962 and headed by J. J. Warren, a European. Although the 1962 census was the first comprehensive and simultaneous one, it was followed by politically motivated complaints which generated tension in the country; and which led to its cancellation. There followed spates of politicization, deliberate falsification of figures and the concomitant cancellations of census results in Nigeria. These have become worsened by the publicly known fact that the appropriation of population data determines the allocation of parliamentary seats and revenue. Consequently, Nigerians from the varying ethnic groups, regions, segments and geopolitical zones have jostled for larger numbers through falsifications of census figures till date (2023). Between 1963 and 1991, several census enumerations took place of which the 1991 was acclaimed the most successfully conducted. It was nationally accepted as reliable until the 2006 census that was conducted by Chief Samuila Danko Makama as the head of the National Population Commission.

It was only after the 2006 census that a total figure was announced for the country and the figures for each State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory. Yet, almost becoming acculturated, there were still complaints especially from the Southeast Geopolitical Zone which protested an under-enumeration. All these were underpinned by insufficiently trained enumerators, supervisors and coordinators. They could not handle the problems that often cropped up during and after headcounts, resultant to the deliberate falsification of entries and figures.

All the censuses between 1866 and 1963 were plagued by restricted coverage and non-simultaneity while those between 1966 and 2006, consequent on the appropriation of parliamentary seats and revenues, were volatile.

Sufficient attention has not been paid to census methodology and experiences. Certain questions have consequently been raised to include:

- i. To what extent do the questionnaire contents for headcounts cover international recommendation?
 - ii. To what extent does the formal procedure of national headcounts follow the international recommendations?
 - iii. What are the qualities of the census fieldworkers? And
 - iv. What problems were and, still are, encountered during fieldwork?
2. With special reference to the 2006 census, the questionnaire and enumerators' manual were examined. This gave insight into the nature of data obtained vis-à-vis the enumerators' manual wherein was the formal procedure used in obtaining data. The formal procedure contained in the manual entailed (Jerry Ogbonnaya Okereke, 2010: 37-43):
- i. Estimating coverage, time and simultaneity : The 2006 census which covered the whole Nigeria from March 21 to March 25, 2006 held simultaneously from zero (00.00) hour of first day of census to midnight of last day of census;
 - ii. Knowing who was counted: which embraced all persons present in households or other living quarters at the midnight of the census day;
 - iii. The counting method: was the canvasser method which entailed the enumerators visiting households, listing members living in them while asking the required questions;
 - iv. Definition of concepts: which entailed giving working definitions to households, localities, enumeration areas and buildings, among others? These ensured clarity of purpose, measurability and comparability;
 - v. Analysis of fieldworkers surveys: which determined the quality of data of fieldworkers, functionaries and their experiences in the field; and
 - vi. Qualification for participation: which was that each function required certain qualification that ranged from O'Level certificates to diplomas and degrees?

Thus, was ensured the quality of fieldworkers and experimental outputs. Working materials, such as census sketch maps, training manuals and questionnaire, indelible ink, call cards and census bags were provided. Yet, in spite of all these, certain factors worked against the effectiveness and efficiency of the fieldworkers. There was the issue of uncertainty of enumerators' remuneration which usually was not known before commencing enumeration. About 54% received between N5, 000 and N15, 000 while about 45% were never paid. The supervisors and coordinators were paid reasonably well, although after weeks the census exercise ended.

There were external interferences through inducements and threats to enumerators in order to sway them away from normal census procedure. However, some enumerators agreed they were given foods while others received monetary tokens. There were obvious poor public attitude during the census exercise towards enumerators. This was especially the case with enumerators who were not compliant or non-indigenes. Enumerators described public attitude as enthusiastic, disinterestedness and hostile.

In addition to public attitude was enumeration malpractice which became recurrent since independence in 1960. Although there were doses of mal-enumeration in coloniality, it became worrisome in post-coloniality when enlightenment informed the agglomerating ethnic groups that a higher population

determined, and will still determine, what any group or territorial patch got. Malpractices had differing colourations - from inducements, threats, use of untrained or indigenous enumerators who could bend the rules and falsify figures aimed at giving certain localities population leverage over others.

Each section of the country wanted an enhanced population, real or falsified; to support agitations for political favours and revenue allocation; and this has always been to the benefit of the politicians' communities. Smarting from having enumerated in his locality, an enumerator said he did not need to have been induced to have worked in favour of his community. Rehearsing Nelson-Kwakor's (2005) opinion, malpractices in the 1991 census was organized. It was rife in homogenous settings and done to draw attention to the area for development amenities because of the complex relationships between population and development (Okereke, 48-49).

In coming around these shortcomings, it has been recommended that quality enumerators who have been well-trained, well-paid and non-indigenous, therefore, competent, be engaged. For sustainability, simple survey techniques should be incorporated into secondary school curriculum as part of social studies.

CONCLUSION

This paper painstakingly examined censuses since 1866 when the exercise was first conducted in the territorial patch that is today referred to as Nigeria. Past censuses, experiences, there from, such as falsification of figures and non-simultaneity; and in post-coloniality since 1962, its politicization, have had dire consequences on future censuses in Nigeria.

A protectorate and regional contraption, a heightened degree of disparateness became obvious especially when the design and developmental privileges accruable from headcounts in a multiethnic nation-state became street knowledge. It became worsened in the post-colonial period and with the 'oil boom' since the 1970s which made hydrocarbon oil the major revenue earner for Nigeria. This occasioned the problem of derivation and revenue allocation which made Nigeria's constituent units to be always at daggers' drawn, jostling with each other in an uneasy harmony.

When, therefore, it became constitutional that population would be a requirement for revenue allocation; and for the distribution of social amenities and political favours, the struggle for numbers became virulent. Regarding politics, census figures played parts in the acquisition of parliamentary or legislative seats.

Summarily, the paper surveyed census exercises in Nigeria, experiences and their implications for the future. Also examined were factors, such as remunerations, interferences, public attitude, enumeration malpractices underpinned by unbridled ethnicization which made impossible the acquisition of accurate census data always associated with growth and development in most climes. Thus, if the conduct of headcounts is altruistically carried out, the benefits to Nigeria will be well-nigh inestimable.

Recommendations

The abandoned 2023 census exercise in Nigeria necessitated the writing of this paper nexus the fact that no concerted studies have been made that aimed at correcting the lapses that plagued previous censuses.

In spite of the repeated non-adherence to formal census procedure is its politicization that has always been exacerbated by blatant regionalism and ethnicization. The disparate and distinctive agglomerating units that have always wanted to know “what is in it for us” are the bane of census exercises in Nigeria. Restating retired General Yakubu Gowon’s statement in the document written pursuant to the declaration of the Republic of Northern Nigeria in 1966 which read: “The basis for unity is not here”, it has downed on Nigerians on what to do. They ought to eschew ethnicity, suspicion and mutual distrust in addition to observing all the international recommendations by the United Nations vis-à-vis the formal procedure for conduct of censuses.

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