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***QUESTION : One of the primary causes of Environmental Degradation in the country could be attributed to rapid growth of population which adversely affects natural resources and the Environment, Discuss.***

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**NAMES OF GROUP MEMBERS**

**1. OMEAZU MARYCYNTHIA CHINASA……LAW/2019/0052..............GROUP LEADER**

**2. ADENIYI FAITH OLUWASEUN…………....LAW/2019/0011……………...RESEARCH**

**3. JEGEDE JOAN MOSINMILOLUWA…........LAW/2019/0040……………..RESEARCH**

**4. ADERIBIGBE ESTHER ADESOPE………....LAW/2019/0013………PROOFREADING**

**5. ADIATU TAWAKALITU IYABODE………..LAW/2019/0015……………...RESEARCH**

**6. AWOFADEJU DEBORAH TITILOPE………LAW/2019/0029……...PROOFREADING**

**7. AYANTAYO ESTHER DOLAPO……………LAW/2019/0032……………...RESEARCH**

**8. IBIKUNLE BUKUNMI JOHN…………… LAW/2019/0039………..............PRESENTER**

**9. OLABUNMI MUSTAPHA OLAFIMIHAN….LAW/2019/0046………………PRINTING**

**10. OMOLOSHO OMOLAYO JANET………..LAW/2019/0053………………REAEARCH**

**11. ONIGBINDE AJIBOLA PRAISE…………..LAW/2019/0054……………....RESEARCH**

**12. POPOOLA RUKAYAH ENIOLA…….......LAW/2019/0059……………….PRINTING**

**13. OTEGBAYO OYEBANJI AYOMIDE……...LAW/2019/0079……………….PRINTING**

**14. ARIKUYERI DUROJAYE SOLOMON……LAW/2019/0080……………….PRINTING**

**15. AWONIYI ELIZABETH OLUWATOBILOBA……LAW/2019/0083……PRESENTER**

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ABSTRACT

*The rapid expansion of human populations worldwide poses significant challenges to the environment, particularly in developing countries. This abstract delves into the intricate relationship between population growth and environmental degradation, with a focus on its implications for natural resources and ecosystems. Through a comprehensive review we will examine how flourishing populations exert pressure on essential resources such as water, land, and energy, leading to their depletion and degradation. Furthermore, it explores the interplay between population growth, urbanization, and industrialization, elucidating their cumulative impacts on air and water pollution, deforestation, habitat loss, and climate change. Finally, this work proposes interdisciplinary approaches that integrate population policies with environmental conservation efforts, socioeconomic development, education, and women's empowerment to mitigate the adverse effects of population growth on the environment and ensure a more sustainable future for generations to come.*

INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of global population growth poses a formidable challenge to the integrity of Earth's ecosystems, especially in nations grappling with rapid demographic expansion. This introduction navigates the complex terrain of the relationship between population dynamics and environmental degradation, emphasizing the pivotal role of unchecked population growth in driving resource depletion and ecological decline. As populations swell, the demand for vital resources such as water, land, and energy escalates, placing immense strain on natural systems already under stress from man made activities. Moreover, the geographical concentration of populations in urban areas aggravate pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change, further aggravating environmental degradation. Against this backdrop, this work aims to dissect the causal pathways linking population growth to environmental decline, offering insights into the underlying mechanisms and potential solutions to mitigate these adverse impacts. By fostering a deeper understanding of this interplay, we can chart a more sustainable course towards a harmonious coexistence between humanity and the planet.

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. **POLLUTTION**

Pollution is the introduction of harmful materials into the environment. These harmful materials are called pollutants. Pollutants can be natural, such as volcanic ash. They can also be created by human activity, such as trash or runoff produced by factories. Pollutants damage the quality of air, water, and land. Many things that are useful to people produce pollution. Cars spew pollutants from their exhaust pipes. Burning coal to create electricity pollutes the air. Industries and homes generate garbage and sewage that can pollute the land and water. Pesticides—chemical poisons used to kill weeds and insects—seep into waterways and harm wildlife.

Pollution is a global problem. Although urban areas are usually more polluted than the countryside, pollution can spread to remote places where no people live. For example, pesticides and other chemicals have been found in the Antarctic ice sheet. In the middle of the northern Pacific Ocean, a huge collection of microscopic plastic particles forms what is known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. All living things from one-celled microbes to blue whales depend on Earth’s supply of air and water. When these resources are polluted, all forms of life are threatened. Air and water currents carry pollution. Ocean currents and migrating fish carry marine pollutants far and wide. Winds can pick up radioactive material accidentally released from a nuclear reactor and scatter it around the world. Smoke from a factory in one country drifts into another country.

Although environmental pollution can be caused by natural events such as forest fires and active volcanoes, use of the word pollution generally implies that the contaminants have an anthropogenic source—that is, a source created by human activities. Pollution has accompanied humankind ever since groups of people first congregated and remained for a long time in any one place. Indeed, ancient human settlements are frequently recognized by their wastes—shell mounds and rubble heaps, for instance. Pollution was not a serious problem as long as there was enough space available for each individual or group. However, with the establishment of permanent settlements by great numbers of people, pollution became a problem, and it has remained one ever since.

Cities of ancient times were often noxious places, fouled by human wastes and debris. Beginning about 1000 CE, the use of coal for fuel caused considerable air pollution, and the conversion of coal to coke for iron smelting beginning in the 17th century exacerbated the problem. In Europe, from the Middle Ages well into the early modern era, unsanitary urban conditions favoured the outbreak of population-decimating epidemics of disease, from plague to cholera and typhoid fever. Through the 19th century, water and air pollution and the accumulation of solid wastes were largely problems of congested urban areas. But, with the rapid spread of industrialization and the growth of the human population to unprecedented levels, pollution became a universal problem.

By the middle of the 20th century, an awareness of the need to protect air, water, and land environments from pollution had developed among the general public. In particular, the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson’s book Silent Spring focused attention on environmental damage caused by improper use of pesticides such as DDT and other persistent chemicals that accumulate in the food chain and disrupt the natural balance of ecosystems on a wide scale. In response, major pieces of environmental legislation[[1]](#footnote-1) were passed in many countries to control and mitigate environmental pollution.

1. **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Natural resources are resources that are drawn from nature and used with few modifications. This includes the sources of valued characteristics such as commercial and industrial use, aesthetic value, scientific interest, and cultural value. On Earth, it includes sunlight, atmosphere, water, land, all minerals along with all vegetation, and wildlife. Natural resources are part of humanity’s natural heritage or protected in nature reserves. Particular areas (such as the rainforest in Fatu-Hiva) often feature biodiversity and geodiversity in their ecosystems. Natural resources may be classified in different ways. Natural resources are materials and components (something that can be used) that can be found within the environment. Every man-made product is composed of natural resources (at its fundamental level).

A natural resource may exist as a separate entity such as fresh water, air, or any living organism such as a fish, or it may be transformed by extractivist industries into an economically useful form that must be processed to obtain the resource such as metal ores, rare-earth elements, petroleum, timber and most forms of energy. Some resources are renewable, which means that they can be used at a certain rate and natural processes will restore them, whereas many extractive industries rely heavily on non-renewable resources that can only be extracted once.

Natural-resource allocations can be at the center of many economic and political confrontations both within and between countries. This is particularly true during periods of increasing scarcity and shortages (depletion and overconsumption of resources). Resource extraction is also a major source of human rights violations and environmental damage. The Sustainable Development Goals and other international development agendas frequently focus on creating more sustainable resource extraction, with some scholars and researchers focused on creating economic models, such as circular economy, that rely less on resource extraction, and more on reuse, recycling and renewable resources that can be sustainably managed.

1. **ENVIRONMENT**

The word Environment is derived from the French word “Environ” which means “surrounding”. Our surrounding includes biotic factors like human beings, Plants, animals, microbes, etc and abiotic factors such as light, air, water, soil, etc. Environment is a complex of many variables, which surrounds man as well as the living organisms.

When hearing the word ‘environment’ most people tend to think of rainforests, oceans and climate change. While none of these thoughts are incorrect, the overall definition of ‘environment’ is a lot more broad. Environment’ refers to the surroundings or conditions that a living organism (people, animals, plants) finds themselves in.

Environment, the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.

Environment can be defined as a sum total of all the living and non-living elements and their effects that influence human life. While all living or biotic elements are animals, plants, forests, fisheries, and birds, non-living or abiotic elements include water, land, sunlight, rocks, and air.

In short, because our environments keep us alive. If our ecosystems were damaged and unable to support us with healthy air, food and water, we would struggle to survive. Environments have a significant impact on the survival of those living within it. For example, if an environment is too hot or cold for an animal, and relocation wasn’t possible, the animal wouldn’t be able to survive. This simple principle applies to people, animals and plans.

Over time life has adapted through reproduction to survive in different environments. For example, giraffes may not have always been able to reach the leaves from the tops of trees, but as the result of a cycle of reproduction and survival, they now can. For more information on this process, take a look at our page on evolution. One of the key threats to our natural environments is climate change brought about by various forms of pollution, such as the burning of fossil fuels. The consequences of climate change are drastic changes to our ecosystems, rendering them unable to continue supporting life.

**3.1. COMPONENTS OF ENVIRONMENT**

Our environment has been classified into four major components: Hydrosphere, Lithosphere, Atmosphere, and Biosphere.

**Hydrosphere :** Hydrosphere includes all water bodies such as lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and ocean etc. Hydrosphere functions in a cyclic nature, which is termed as hydrological cycle or water cycle.

**Lithosphere :** Lithosphere means the mantle of rocks constituting the earth’s crust. The earth is a cold spherical solid planet of the solar system, which spins in its axis and revolves around the sun at a certain constant distance .Lithosphere mainly, contains soil, earth rocks, mountain etc. Lithosphere is divided into three layers-crusts, mantle and core (outer and inner).

**Atmosphere :** The cover of the air, that envelopes the earth is known as the atmosphere. Atmosphere is a thin layer which contains gases like oxygen, carbon dioxide etc. and which protects the solid earth and human beings from the harmful radiations of the sun. There are five concentric layers within the atmosphere, which can be differentiated on the basis of temperature and each layer has its own characteristics.

**Biosphere :** It is otherwise known as the life layer, it refers to all organisms on the earth’s surface and their interaction with water and air. It consists of plants, animals and micro-organisms, ranging from the tiniest microscopic organism to the largest whales in the sea. Biology is concerned with how millions of species of animals, plants and other organisms grow, feed, move, reproduce and evolve over long periods of time in different environments. Its subject matter is useful to other sciences and professions that deal with life, such as agriculture, forestry and medicine. The richness of biosphere depends upon a number of factors like rainfall, temperature, geographical reference etc. Apart from the physical environmental factors, the man made environment includes human groups, the material infrastructures built by man, the production relationships and institutional systems that he has devised. The social environment shows the way in which human societies have organized themselves and how they function in order to satisfy their needs.

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**

Environmental degradation is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as quality of air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems; habitat destruction; the extinction of wildlife; and pollution. It is defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be deleterious or undesirable. The environmental degradation process amplifies the impact of environmental issues which leave lasting impacts on the environment. Eighty-plus years after the abandonment of Wallaroo Mines (Kadina, South Australia), mosses remain the only vegetation at some spots of the site’s grounds.

Environmental degradation is one of the ten threats officially cautioned by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change of the United Nations. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction defines environmental degradation as “the reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives, and needs”.

It is caused by a variety of factors, ranging from human activities to natural disasters, and its effects can be devastating. Many of these effects can cause further degradation, which means that this impact works as a downward cycle. Fortunately, there are solutions, and we can all work together to mitigate its impacts. Plant With Purpose exists to help reverse this cycle and create a more sustainable future for communities all around our planet.

Environmental degradation has been among the most concerning global issues in the 21st century. The aggravation of environmental issues is becoming increasingly more worrisome to the world as it affects multidimensional aspects of a nation in terms of economics, social, and environment. As the global economy continues to develop, reaching an equipoise between economic progression and environmental sustainability is a critical challenge to the world. In light of that, the role of renewable energy in the environmental sustainability has raised significant concern. The application of renewable energy technologies has advanced to serve a critical role in mitigating the environmental degradation issue. Unlike conventional fossil fuels, Renewable energies are sustainable energy sources, and most importantly, they are not as detrimental to the environment as non-renewable energies.

Environmental degradation comes in many types. When natural habitats are destroyed or natural resources are depleted, the environment is degraded; direct environmental degredation, such as deforestation which has readily visible; this can be caused by more indirect process, such as the build up of plastic pollution over time or the buildup of greenhouse gases that causes tipping points in the climate system. Efforts to counteract this problem include environmental protection and environmental resources management. Mismanagement that leads to degradation can also lead to environmental conflict where communities organize in opposition to the forces that mismanaged the environment.

**FACTORS AFFECTING POLPULATION**

The factors affecting distribution of population may broadly be grouped into the following major categories[[2]](#footnote-2):

1. Physical factors

2. Socio-economic factors

3. Demographic factors and

4. Political factors

**1. PHYSICAL FACTORS AFFECTING DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION**

Man makes the choice of molding space according to his cultural values and hence, there are variations in habitations in response to environmental stimuli. He relates to the natural environment through settlements, which are physical embodiments of an ideal environment.

(i) **Climate:-**  is one of the most important natural conditions. It determines the nature of the flora of the region and influences agriculture. Climate also determines the type of animals that are associated with the region. Humans seek favorable climatic conditions in the places they want to settle in. The climatic belts are the principal areas of most of the human activity. It is evident from the world’s population distribution that the highest populated countries of the world are mostly located in the tropical regions. A warm, comfortable climate attracts people. Regions with such climates provide favorable conditions for a wide range of fauna to thrive, supporting the life systems in the place. Agriculture and animal husbandry make it possible to provide food for large populations. On the other hand, places with extreme climatic conditions are usually scarcely populated because it is difficult to sustain human life in such places. Countries in the temperate regions are also well populated. The regions are colder than the tropical regions but are hotter than the polar zones[[3]](#footnote-3).

(ii) **Topography or terrain**:- Navigable areas are more populated than rough ones. Mountains are less preferred because of lack of arable land. In addition, the cost of transportation, construction and agriculture are considerably higher in such places. In general, high altitudes also impose a physiological on humans’ capacity to adapt. This is because of reduced atmospheric pressure and low oxygen content. Higher altitudes, therefore, do not favor population and growth. Low lying plains and coastal areas are more favoured areas for human settlement.

(iii) **Water:-**  Water is essential for human survival. The ancient civilizations of the world flourished near rivers and the coastal areas. The Nile, Amazon, and Ganges river systems supported rich civilizations on their banks. Adequate rainfall favors vegetation and agriculture which in turn, determine a place’s suitability for habitation. Because of lack of water, vast expanses of deserts are uninhabited. For the same reason, there is less population on the rain-shadow side of a hill or mountain; however, the leeward side is often densely populated. Thus, population is tends to be concentrated in the well-watered river valleys and coastal plains.

(iv) **Soil:-**  Soil quality influences density and distribution of the population. A substantial population of populations earn their livelihood from agriculture which depends on the quality of soil. Food crops are grown on the soil, thus, is one of the most important raw materials required by population. However, scientific agricultural practices, with the aid of technology, have succeeded in converting low-yield soils to better quality ones. In the past, degradation or overutilization of soil led to the disappearance of flourishing civilizations, such as the Mayan in Central America. Vast reserves of mineral resources encouraged the establishment of industries, which attracted settlements.

(v) **Location of a place**—proximity to major towns and cities—favors concentration of population. Generally, staying within the city limits increases living costs. The city’s periphery or nearby towns provide affordable housing facilities. Cheap and reliable transportation provide convenient means of commuting.

(vi) **Natural disasters** discourage population concentration. Frequent storms, earthquakes, floods, wild fires discourage formation of settlements as people migrate to safer places. There are many examples of destruction of settlements due to the natural disasters.

**2. SOCIO ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING POPULATION DISTRIBUTION**

The choice of settlement is generally based on natural processes. However, with time, man has been able to adjust and control the natural processes to some extent. Thus, the factors influencing the choice of a place for settling no longer depends entirely on natural conditions. As needs changed with the evolution of human society, social and economic perspectives gained primacy.

(i)**Economic activity :** is an indicator of employment opportunities. People in the rural areas are largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. If the land fails to support the rural population, or with more opportunities available in urban areas, they may choose to migrate to cities. Concentration of population in urban areas is an outcome of diverse economic activities and livelihood options offered by cities. Usually, there is work for almost everyone, which is unlike in villages where there are fewer options. Therefore, population density in the towns and cities tends to be higher than in rural areas, and will continue to increase. By their very nature, cities provide diverse livelihood opportunities in both the formal and the informal sectors. Industries are a large job market, and have attracted cheap labor for several decades. The influx of labor leads to settlements being established, often on otherwise uninhabitable land. For example, Hydroelectric power stations in largely uninhabited areas attract migrants to these places, resulting in increase in population. Similarly, due to growing service and tourism industry, a large migrant population have settled in the city of Dubai, making it one of the fastest growing cities in the world due to tourism.

(ii) **Social Organization of communities in new areas** encourages the movement of people and settling in newer lands. Man is a social animal and it becomes essential for him to form a community, creating a familiar environment where he stays. People moving out of their native places tend to settle in those areas, or parts of the areas, where there are people with language, culture, food habits and habits that are like theirs. It is common to find cities having residential areas which are communal in nature.

**3. DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF POPULATION DISTRIBUTION**

The demographic factors are the characteristics of the population that have considerable influence on population distribution and settlement patterns. These include fertility and mortality trends, and migration. Fertility and mortality together influence the natural increase in a region. Over time, the differential growth rates, results of fertility and mortality, lead to changes in population density and distribution.

(i) **Migration** has deep influence on population distribution. The push factors, or negative circumstances, at the place of origin tend to motivate people to leave their native places to newer areas. Better opportunities in distant lands also encourage migration. People may choose to move due to land scarcity, shortage of work in current place of residence, insufficient wages or salaries, inadequate medical facilities and education, etc. Expectations of a better standard of living are often the main factors that drive rural to urban migration. The migration process allows redistribution of population, but it also puts pressure on the place of destination and increases the population density in this place.

(ii) **Natural increase** is the net outcome of fertility and mortality in a region. If in a region, the fertility level is high, the population of that place tends to increase. In such situations, mortality brings stability because of deaths. Epidemics and disease have always significantly influenced mortality levels. In earlier times, high occurrence of disease resulted in more deaths. To offset the loss, a high level of fertility was maintained. With medical advances, many diseases could be cured and the death rate fell sharply. In effect, the population grew. However, this created the problems of high population density and pressure on limited resources. With the introduction of contraceptives and with several family planning options available, birth rate began to go down.

**4. POLITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING POPULATION DISTRIBUTION**

These includesWar, political disturbance, conflict, and weak administration negatively affect population distribution.

(i) **War and political conflicts** take a great toll on human lives. Death rates are high, and people are forced to move out in search of safety. Mortality rates peak and the out-migration dominates. Safer locations experience a sizeable population growth because of the in-flow of migrants. This is also the situation in regions near the political boundaries of countries that do not have peaceful relations. Even if there is no conflict, the fear of one compels people to move, making these areas the least populated ones.

(ii) **Political unrest and discrimination are detrimental to population growth**. Clashes between different political parties or people with different religious beliefs have often resulted in a reduction of population in the affected area. Before settling in a new place permanently, migrant population looks for a place that not only provides economic opportunities but also provides safe and healthy environment for wholesome living. A politically unstable region is unable to provide both these conditions and hence it discourages not only the incoming migrant population but also the already residing population which might be forced to leave the region in search of peaceful locations for settlement. Discrimination faced by migrants because of race, language, food, culture etc., discourages in-migration. This has reduced the population growth on one hand and newer settlements on the other.

(iii) **Policies encouraging migration have often led to population growth in the destination region.** International labor movements take place where rules governing cross-border migration are lenient. Migration helps in the redistribution of population. Policies that promote reduction in fertility levels, banning of infanticide, etc. also influence the population growth in a place. For example, China’s strict enforcement of one-child policy succeeded in curbing fertility levels and controlling population.

No single factor can be considered as solely responsible for concentrated or scanty populations, or their distribution and growth. Most of the factors described in this module are interrelated and often act collectively. Advances in technology have helped humans settle in places where it was not possible a few decades ago. The tremendous population growth in the world population has forced many to settle in uninhabitable regions where there is a shortage of adequate natural resources. Often, people do not have the option of choosing where they must live. Earlier, physical factors determined population distribution; however the industrial revolution and accompanying urbanization increased transport and communication networks. These developments influenced population distribution. In this light present density map of population is a cumulative outcome of the past[[4]](#footnote-4).

**CAUSES OF POPULATION EXPLOSION IN NIGERIA**

The causes of population explosion in Nigeria are numerous. This paper will try as much as possible to highlight and discuss the various causes of population explosion in our dear country. Below are the various causes of rapid growth of population in Nigeria.

**1. Lack of birth control law put in place by the Governments**: Federal, State and Local Governments have failed in this regard as highlighted above. Nigeria is a country where married and unmarried couples give birth to children the way they want. Nigeria is a nation with a high number of orphanage homes. Normally, an orphanage home is a home for children whose parents are dead[[5]](#footnote-5). But in Nigeria, there are orphanage homes where children whose parents are alive. This is a sign of population explosion. Campbell[[6]](#footnote-6) quoted the former Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Eze Duruiheoma and said that Nigerians knew that they were by far the most populous country in Africa, and they were proud of it. According to the author, by the year 2050, the author predicted that Nigeria's population will displace the population of the United States as the third most populated country in the world after China and India. The former Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC) as revealed by Campbell[[7]](#footnote-7) also noted that Nigeria has no population policy that would limit births, and the people of Nigeria have traditionally valued large families. However, because of the lack of birth control law put in place by the Federal, State and Local Governments, the population of human beings has outgrowth available resources in Nigeria. It is a very serious challenge to the country’s development.

**2. Lack of family planning :**  Since the Federal, State and Local Governments failed in their responsibilities to regulate the number of children per couple, each couple on his part equally failed in his responsibility to adopt appropriate family planning. According to Umana[[8]](#footnote-8) Most couples failed to use contraceptives in the control of birth. Umana further added that inability to use contraceptives is a common practice among couples in the Northern part of Nigeria[[9]](#footnote-9).

**3. Early marriages:** Couples married at the early ages had a very serious implication on the population growth. Such couples are not mature enough to control the number of children both of them will give birth to. A man and a woman coming together and married is a very serious issue that it should not be taking for granted. In Nigeria, we had cases of couples who got married, but a few years later, they are not together again, leaving the children to take care of themselves. We equally had cases where new born babies were dumped by couples in the nearby refuge or abandoned houses. This is an indication that such couples are not ready for marriage. Furthermore, Nigeria as a country has experienced this kind of situation, hence, rapid population growth was the result.

**4. Male child preference syndrome :**  In Nigeria, male children were more highly valued than female children[[10]](#footnote-10). According to Oramah[[11]](#footnote-11) The reasons for such a habit were of carrying on the family name by the male children, greater upper-body strength for physical labor, and among others. Unfortunately, such a habit, in most cases, leads to the common practice of continuous child birth in an attempt to have male offspring. Also, in most cases, couples without male child or children will be receiving pressure from the husband’s family against the man and his wife. In an attempt to satisfy his family's demand, the man will go ahead and marry another woman. The process may likely continue until at least a male child will be giving birth to. Osam[[12]](#footnote-12) quoted Nnadi[[13]](#footnote-13) and Ogege[[14]](#footnote-14), reported that the society placed more value on male children than females because of properties and other traditional benefits attached to the male children.

**5. Religion beliefs :** There are three major religions in Nigeria, namely, Christianity, Islam and Local tradition. In Islam, men were allowed to marry more than one wife and also the same to the Local traditional religion. According to Oramah[[15]](#footnote-15), Islamic religion encourages large families and early marriages that are associated with polygamous family system. In addition, Osam[[16]](#footnote-16) reported that such men were polygamists in nature and they believed that they have the capacity to sustain such large families without taking into consideration that they are contributing to the population explosion in Nigeria.

**6. High rate of illiteracy among Nigerians:** Illiteracy is a disease that in most cases is not noticeable by the person concerned. The person concerned felt that what she or he is doing is right, but in the actual sense, is not right. This is the exact behavior of some of the men who are polygamist in nature. The illiteracy as used in this paper means those people that lack the knowledge of population and sex education.

**7. High sexual urges among some men and women:** Although, normal men and women have sexual urges. But in a case where the sexual urges of both parties are too high, it becomes a very serious problem to society. A man with high sexual urges cannot effectively remain with one wife. Such a man will end up marrying many wives with a large number of children. Also, there were some large numbers of women with high sexual urges, such women will equally end up having children with different men that they cannot cater for.

**8. Old-age social security:** In Nigeria, several cultures believed that children were the only form of support for their parents during old age[[17]](#footnote-17). Because of this mind- set among some families, most men ended up having many children. With these many children, some men and women felt that one or more among the children will be able to take care of them when they might have reached old age. Some parents also believed that, in the case when they eventually died, the success of their burial ceremonies will depend on the large numbers of their children. In most cases, the reverse is the case. In view of this, Osam[[18]](#footnote-18) reported that the result of the existence of Almajiri or street beggars had caused social problems such as poverty, illiteracy and violent crimes in the Northern part of Nigeria. All these are the products of having too many children by couples without proper management of such children.

**9. Perceived high infant mortality:**  This perceived high infant mortality mind-set is very common among some couples. With this mind-set, some men and women end up having too many children they cannot control and manage. *Oramah*[[19]](#footnote-19) discovered that some people perceived the need to have many babies with the view that some will survive and some will die. *Oramah*[[20]](#footnote-20)further stated that the surviving children will help their parents in the farm, support them when they are already old and so forth. This kind of mentality thinking has gone so deep in the minds of so many Nigerians. Today, the Federal Government cannot even tell Nigerians the exact population figures.

**10. Immigration:** According to Renewable Resources Coalition[[21]](#footnote-21), the unchecked immigration into countries will lead to overpopulation to the point where those countries no longer have the needed resources to sustain such a population. Nigeria as a country falls under the categories of such countries. Today, we have the issue of Boko Haram in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of the members of Boko Haram are not Nigerians.

**11. Better medical facilities:** Victor[[22]](#footnote-22) sees better medical facilities provided by the governments as one of the causes of population explosion. Victor[[23]](#footnote-23) stressed that illnesses that had claimed thousands of lives in the past and now were cured as a result of the intervention of vaccines developed by medical scientists. According to Victor People now live longer because of better medical facilities available to them in Nigeria. Technically, this has contributed to the rapid population growth in Nigeria.

**12. Falling Mortality Rate:** The primary (and perhaps most obvious) cause of population growth is an imbalance between births and deaths. The [infant mortality rate has decreased](https://www.who.int/gho/child_health/mortality/neonatal_infant_text/en/#:~:text=Situation%20and%20trends&text=Globally%2C%20the%20infant%20mortality%20rate,to%204.1%20million%20in%202017.) globally, with 4.1 million infant deaths in 2017 compared to 8.8 million in 1990, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). This is welcome public health news, of course. At the same time, lifespans are increasing around the world. Those of us who are alive today will likely live much longer than most of our ancestors. Global average life expectancy has [more than doubled since 1900](https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy), thanks to advancements in medicine, technology, and general hygiene. Falling mortality rates are certainly nothing to complain about either, but widespread longevity does contribute to the mathematics of increasing population numbers[[24]](#footnote-24).

**13. Underutilized Contraception**: The global fertility rate has fallen steadily over the years, down from an average of 5 children per woman in 1950 to 2.4 children per woman today, according to the [UN Population Division](https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/). Along with that promising trend, contraceptive use has slowly but steadily [increased globally,](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception) rising from 54% in 1990 to 57.4% in 2015. Yet, on the whole, contraceptive use is still underutilized. For example, according to the WHO, an estimated [214 million women](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception) in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using modern contraceptives. These women aren’t using contraceptives for a variety of reasons, including social norms or religious beliefs that discourage birth control, misconceptions about adverse side effects, and a lack of agency for women to make decisions around sex and family planning. An estimated [44% of pregnancies](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X%2818%2930029-9/fulltext) were unintended worldwide between 2010-2014. Getting more women the access and agency to utilize family planning methods could go a long way in flattening the population curve[[25]](#footnote-25).**14. Lack of Female Education:** Although female access to education has increased over the years, the gender gap remains. Roughly 130 million girls worldwide are out of school currently, and an estimated [15 million girls](https://www.populationmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/sdg-report-gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018-en.pdf) of primary school age will *never* learn to read and write, compared with 10 million boys. Increasing and encouraging education among women and girls can have a number of positive ripple effects, including [delayed childbearing](https://www.populationmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/female_education_employment.pdf), healthier children, and an increase in workforce participation. Plenty of [evidence](https://www.populationmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/female-education-and-its-impact-on-fertility.pdf) suggests a negative correlation between female education and fertility rates. If increased female education can delay or decrease fertility and provide girls with opportunities beyond an early marriage, it could also help to mitigate current population trends[[26]](#footnote-26).

**15. Agricultural advancements** : Agricultural revolution, industrial revolution and tool making revolutions made a lot of advancement in the field of agriculture. This led to the drastic increase in food production which finally ended up in over population[[27]](#footnote-27).

**16. Advanced fertility treatments :** The first IVF treatments were done on rabbits in the year 1934. By 1940 these IVF treatments were conducted in humans also. IVF is fertilization of an embryo outside the human body. After a lot of opposition from the public the first IVF baby was born in 1978. This was a major turning point in the history of mankind. Millions of couples were benefited which led to the increase in population[[28]](#footnote-28).

**EFFECTS OF OVER POPULATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

1***. Food Security***: As the population burgeons, there's a heightened demand for food, potentially causing shortages and increased prices in certain regions, thereby impeding access to nutritious meals[[29]](#footnote-29).

2***. Urbanization***: Overpopulation exacerbates overcrowding and resource scarcity, making it arduous for individuals to secure suitable housing, especially prevalent in developing nations with inadequate infrastructure.

3***. Access to Education***: Overpopulation poses hurdles to education by limiting access to schools and educators, hampering students' ability to acquire knowledge and restricting their future prospects.

4***. Healthcare Strain***: Nearly half of the global populace lacks essential healthcare services, leading to strain on existing systems as more people require medical attention, resulting in inadequate services in some areas.

5***. Environmental Impact***: The surge in population amplifies waste and pollution, contributing to water and air contamination, thereby detrimentally impacting ecosystems and human health. The WHO estimates that pollution leads to approximately 7 million premature deaths annually.

6***. Degradation of Environment***: Overpopulation leads to rapid environmental degradation, resulting in increased pollution, deforestation, loss of freshwater sources, and habitat destruction for wildlife.

7. ***Deforestation:*** As populations expand, forests are cleared to accommodate human settlements, infrastructure, and agriculture, reducing oxygen production and disrupting ecosystems.

8***. Eutrophication***: Overpopulation contributes to eutrophication, where excessive nutrients from agricultural runoff lead to algal blooms in water bodies, disrupting aquatic ecosystems and depleting oxygen levels.

9***. Loss of Freshwater***: Overpopulation exacerbates pollution and depletion of freshwater sources due to industrial and domestic activities, contaminating rivers and lakes and affecting both human and aquatic life.

10. ***Depletion of Natural Resources***: A growing population puts strain on natural resources, leading to their depletion. Scarce resources like fossil fuels and minerals are exploited at unsustainable rates, eventually exhausting them.

11. ***Global Warming and Climate Change***: The increasing population contributes to higher carbon emissions, exacerbating global warming and climate change. This results in extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and loss of biodiversity.

12***. Extinction of Species***: Overpopulation, coupled with habitat destruction and climate change, accelerates the extinction of species. Coral reefs, iconic wildlife like elephants and giraffes, and numerous other species are under threat due to human activities.

13***. Increased Habitat Loss***: The expansion of human settlements and infrastructure leads to habitat loss for wildlife, further endangering vulnerable species.

14. ***Emergence of Epidemics and Pandemics***: Overpopulation increases human-animal interactions, creating opportunities for the emergence and spread of diseases. Globalization and travel facilitate the rapid transmission of pathogens, as seen with the COVID-19 pandemic.

15***. Elevation in Crime Rate***: Overpopulation, coupled with resource scarcity, can lead to socio-economic disparities and an increase in crime rates as people resort to illegal means to meet their needs. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts in sustainable population management strategies, environmental conservation, and resource allocation to ensure the well-being of both current and future generations[[30]](#footnote-30).

CONCLUSION

 Population dynamics are influenced not only by birth and death rates but also by socio-economic factors like education, income levels, healthcare access, and cultural norms regarding family size. Additionally, migration patterns, both internal and international, play a significant role in shaping population trends. Natural resources, beyond being mere materials, are part of complex ecosystems with interconnected dependencies. The exploitation of these resources often leads to environmental alterations such as deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, the concept of 'natural resources' has evolved to include not just tangible items but also ecosystem services like pollination, climate regulation, and water purification. The environment, while traditionally viewed as a passive backdrop, is increasingly recognized as a dynamic system with feedback loops and resilience thresholds. Environmental degradation encompasses not just visible pollution but also subtle changes in ecological balance, such as shifts in species distributions or disruptions in nutrient cycles. Factors contributing to overpopulation are multifaceted and vary across regions and cultures. They include social norms favoring large families, lack of access to contraceptives, gender inequalities, economic incentives tied to population growth, and historical demographic trends.

The impacts of overpopulation on natural resources and the environment are intricate and nonlinear. For instance, increased demand for food leads to agricultural expansion, which in turn can result in habitat destruction and soil degradation. Similarly, urbanization driven by population growth often leads to increased energy consumption, waste generation, and pollution levels. Addressing overpopulation requires a holistic approach that considers not just demographic trends but also social, economic, and environmental factors. This includes promoting education and empowerment, improving healthcare access, implementing sustainable resource management practices, and fostering international cooperation on population-related issues and environmental conservation. By understanding the complexities and interconnections between population dynamics, natural resource use, environmental degradation, and socio-economic factors, we can develop more effective and sustainable strategies for addressing the challenges posed by overpopulation.

 Overpopulation occurs when birth rates surpass mortality rates, leading to increased strain on resources and the environment. The causes of overpopulation are multifaceted, involving high birth rates, improved healthcare leading to reduced mortality, limited access to family planning, poverty, and cultural influences favoring larger families. The effects of overpopulation are far-reaching, impacting natural resources and the environment significantly. Overexploitation of resources like water and forests, pollution of air and water, habitat destruction, and loss of biodiversity are among the consequences. These effects contribute to environmental degradation, threatening the sustainability of ecosystems and the well-being of all living beings. Addressing overpopulation requires a holistic approach. This includes education on family planning, improved healthcare access, poverty alleviation, sustainable resource management practices, environmental conservation efforts, and fostering a societal shift towards valuing the balance between human needs and environmental preservation. By prioritizing these measures, we can work towards a more sustainable future for both humans and the planet.

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