

Masters Thesis

# **Creating a Sustainable Birth Registration Process for Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigeria Case Study**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Sub-Saharan African continent is currently faced with a huge gap of birth registration data of children under 5 years old. Initiating the desired level of development in Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular has been an elusive task due to limited population data in several developing nations; the data in these countries is most often estimated. Lack of population data hinder the government in provision of development infrastructure and social services. This thesis investigates the barrier inherent in the procedure of registering birth between 2014-2019 of children (0-5 years) in Southern and Northern Nigeria using content analysis. The research design is a case study of Northern and Southern Nigeria using secondary data. Policy papers on population dynamics from developing countries and the international domain were analyzed using content analysis.

The result of this study indicates that there are barriers inherent in the procedural framework of birth registration in Nigeria and this hinder parents in Southern and Northern Nigeria from complying with the rules in the Birth Registration Act. These challenges are presented in different forms from educational barriers, poverty, economic barriers, cultural beliefs, procedure of birth registration and distance to birth registration centres. Children without birth registration data will be considered non-existence, will have no identity, be deprived of their fundamental rights and will remain stateless.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BRA	Birth Registration Act
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Systems.
FOS	Federal Office of Statistics.
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board
ND	No date
NIMC	National Identity Management Commission
NPopC	National Population Commission
NPP	Nigeria Population Policy
SMS	Short message service
SDGR	Sustainable Development Goal Report
U5	Under five-year-old
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNPRVSS	United Nations principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization



# Chapter 1 : INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and statement of the problem

It has been estimated that some developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa will have a population explosion by 2050, Nigeria has been identified as one of such countries (United Nations, 2019) and predicted to have a population increase of about 411 million by 2050 (De Graaf and Wiertz, 2019). With this huge figure, the question that comes to mind is *does the country have the available infrastructure to provide for the well-being of these number of citizens?* Does the country have the necessary data to create the infrastructure needed to provide the necessary social welfare services for its citizens? Having a huge population without a proper development plan can rear itself into a societal challenge that might lead to social ills such as overpopulation, hunger, lack of shelter, unemployment, lack of quality education, and the list goes on. Such social ills can put pressure or competition on available resources (De Graaf and Wiertz, 2019) of the government. As a result of this, it can be impossible for the government to provide adequate infrastructure and required social welfare benefits for its citizens. With this view in mind, the government is expected to have the required statistics about its citizens to prepare itself with adequate tools to ensure that the population is effectively managed with this resource; thus, avoiding overpopulation which can degenerate into a societal challenge. To eliminate such social problem, the government require adequate data about the citizens' to enact relevant policies; this information can be gathered through birth registration.

Birth registration according to UNICEF (2013, p.11) has been defined as “the continuous, permanent and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of birth in accordance with the legal requirement of the country”. With this knowledge of what birth registration is, studies on the birth registration phenomenon have revealed that the data “is very low in developing countries” (Makinde, Olapeju, Ogbuoji and Babalola, 2016) and continues to be inaccurate and unreliable. The right to the birth registration itself is “denied to many children in developing countries” (Makinde et al., 2016. p.316). This creates a big challenge for a country like Nigeria which is already predicted will have a population explosion by 2050 (United Nations, 2019; De Graaf and Wiertz, 2019). Also, the fertility rate in sub-Saharan Africa has been reported to be high and imposing additional problems to the high population (United Nations, 2018). With increasing population therefore, the government needs to generate a sustainable data collection of the citizens. Oversight of this task will deepen the overpopulation problem while the citizens risk having their basic human rights abused (Makinde et al., 2016;

Bequele, 2005). These abuses can be reflected in the form of child labour, human trafficking, early marriage, early enrolment in the military, lack of access to immunization and health care facilities, lack of access to education and inheritance, including the right to a nationality (Todres, 2003; Makinde et al., 2016; Manby, 2019). On the part of the government, the registration of birth can give insight into the population resident in the country, which in turn gives a reliable data required to provide infrastructure (Pelowsky et al., 2015), manage the population figure not to degenerate into overpopulation, vis a vis the resources to be allocated to infrastructure development and services for the citizens. Using an example from the Health and Education perspective, Brumberg and Golombek (2012) argued that if the data from the birth registration is available and properly understood, it may affect the way health policies are made and how resources are allocated efficiently to such services. With this insight, the government can prevent the outbreak of serious diseases, keep a tab on the population to prevent population explosion, and design immunization programs for children (Tobin, Obi, and Isah, 2013). The vaccination of the elderly can also be made possible with such data.

Not tracking the population makes it difficult to track development, meet the basic needs of the citizens and provide social welfare; an activity that should commence with the children from birth. This makes the collection of this data more manageable at this stage and eliminates estimating a country's population figure which is often flawed.

When a country is being referred to as the country of young people with about 31 million of its over 200 million population under 5 years of age (United Nations Children's Fund, [UNICEF] Nigeria report, 2017), we are interested to explore the possibility of a change that can lift the children of developing countries out of poverty using these set of the population. The choice to focus on the birth registration of children in this study is to explore the possibility of solving the problem by gathering data from the children rather than older citizens whose data might prove more difficult to gather. Such difficulty can be exemplified in the census exercise which is referred to as having "irregularities" (Makinde et al., 2016, p.318). Therefore, gathering data of the citizens for policy and social development purposes through an alternative to census should be considered. In Nigeria, the country's population is most often estimated due to the above explanation. The researcher is of the view that with this estimation being used, there is a possibility of making the wrong decisions that affect the social and economic wellbeing of the citizens. Also, there might be consequences for population explosion like unemployment, or depletion of the country's resources if the population is not tracked adequately. It is therefore advocated that knowledge of the population of a country on a timely basis is essential for socio-economic development planning and timely decision making (United Nations, 2014). Getting the above-mentioned consequences under control will entail adequate information gathering for resource allocation and benefit provision.

There has been a growing concern about ways to gather the citizens' data most efficiently and sustainably across all the regions in Nigeria. This growing concern prompts the idea of using birth registration as an appropriate tool for this data gathering in the researchers' view. Currently, Nigeria and most sub-Saharan African countries are reported to be struggling to get birth and death registration data up to date and to the much-clamored universal state (Makinde et al., 2016). At the moment of writing this thesis, it is unclear to what extent there is currently a uniform procedure for collecting birth registration information for planning for the children born in Nigeria and other developing countries, considering the diversity in the geography of these countries. This diversity also applies across the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria. The study will be focused on the barrier that is inherent in the procedure of birth registration between 2014 and 2019. The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate the barrier inherent in the procedure of registering birth between 2014-2019 of children (0-5 years) in Southern and Northern Nigeria and if it has prevented parents or not from increasing the birth registration figure during the period under investigation. If increased birth registration is achieved, it can assist with improved planning and serve as a source of data gathering for a more inclusive society. Most research on birth registration in the country had been carried out to check for completeness or geared towards universal registration. Examples of such are Makinde et al. (2016), Williams (2014), and Adair and Lopez (2018). This study aims to investigate the barriers to the procedure of birth registration. If there are any barriers, are these considered an impediment by the parents to registering their children or not? Can the procedure be improved from its current state, which might involve eliminating or reducing existing barriers with the mindset to further increase birth registration among the citizens? Generating interest from parents to register their children can serve as a form of data gathering of children (0-5 years) and build on the population data of the country with the view of creating data for social infrastructure and provision of social welfare programs that might lift citizens out of poverty like their counterparts in the developed countries.

At the time of conducting this study, there is still a continuous trend of population increase, and weak school enrolment (National Population Commission and Health Policy Project, [NPopC and HPP], 2015) without a corresponding channel of capturing the population increase. Getting accurate data is problematic as a result of estimation of the population figure (Worldometer, n.d). This creates inconsistency in the figures available for planning, allocation of resources, locating criminals, and provision of basic needs for the citizens especially children who are the focus of this research. Birth registration, a data gathering source, can complement the census figure (Maduekwe, Banjo and Sangodapo, 2016) and get the accurate figure for policy planning. This is therefore being explored in this study as a probable solution to solving the problem of population explosion. Boekle-Giuffrida (2009) argued that there is a prospect for

individuals to escape poverty if they possess a birth registration document; this document can only be obtained when a birth is registered. Therefore, birth registration may be an aid to prevent the increasing population from falling into poverty.

The essence of data capturing in the twenty-first century can also not be overlooked considering the power it gives for proper allocation of resources. There is also a growing need and attention being given to data gathering around the world now more than ever before from a multitude of sources ranging from social media, cell phones, GPS, etc. (Peter, 2016). According to Mutula and Wamukoya (2009), it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that they create a national structure that will ensure that citizens' information is gathered, stored, and used for efficiency and meeting the government's service-related targets. These targets can be in form of the provision of essential welfare services like education and health; using the information from birth registration can help to achieve this. On the premise of this therefore, gathering required information on children to enable them to have an identity through birth registration can be considered an important information gathering that can assist government and policymakers to put vital statistics together. As Peters (2016) argued, civil registration as a source of information gathering can be used to improve policy planning in health, infrastructure provision, coordination of activities as well as preventing corruption and fraud in a public organization like the local government. A Birth certificate that is issued after birth registration can be used for school enrolment (Makinde et al., 2016; Pelowsky et al., 2015), issuance of travel documents, immunization schedule, monitor public health intervention (Brumberg et al., 2012), registration for National Identity card registration in Nigeria can additionally benefit from this certificate. Aligning a relevant quote to this importance, "for children to count, they have to be counted" Harry Belafonte (Bequele, 2005) thus the importance of registering every birth.

According to Tobin et al. (2013), birth can go unregistered in developing countries, culminating in negative implications for the planning and development of the economies of these nations. Examples of such implications are inadequate resource allocation provision for immunization of children, universal education, and even programs relating to maternal and child nutrition. Therefore, birth information data should be gathered sustainably, digitalize birth registration for easy accessibility, as well as be able to use for important government decisions like policy planning. In health or education for example, the birth data will be valuable because these are areas that enhance national competitiveness and are considered a service that can be sold in the global market (Leathwood and Read, 2008). The health and wellbeing of a nation can thus benefit from available data that can be deployed for adequate policy planning.

The above-mentioned rationale makes it significant that birth registration records should be given priority to safeguard the rights of the children. Fisker, Rodrigues and Helleringer (2019) asserted that having a record of this important event will assist the individuals to have necessary rights and access especially to benefits like education, health care and inheritance. However, despite efforts by the government at the national, state, and local level, registration of birth in Nigeria is still a task that the government struggles with (Makinde et al., 2016). Some researchers like Pelowski et al. (2015) lend credence to this statement when they opined that many developing countries were still seeing registration of birth as a struggle despite the strong pressure from different bodies put in place to record every child's birth. For this research, the focus will be limited to birth registration while death registration will be referenced as it relates to its importance in line with this research work.

With the above clarification on the problem and how birth registration might contribute to resolving the problem, this study will then expatiate on the concept. The initial study setting was Eti Osa local government area of Lagos state in Nigeria, where the research population was initially planned to be taken. However, through the research, series of activities that ensued while the work was ongoing like the global pandemic (COVID-19) necessitated a change in the direction of the research. The research will refocus and examine the birth registration procedure in the two regions of Southern and Northern Nigeria. The modification in research design is necessitated by the inability to conduct interviews and administer questionnaires as specified in the initial proposal due to Covid-19 restrictions.

## **1.2 Understanding Birth Registration and Why Children Need to Be Registered**

UNICEF has described birth registration as the “official recording of a child’s birth by the government” (UNICEF Nigeria, 2019, [Forward] para.1) and which also signifies the existence of the child legally and creates a basis for safeguarding the basic right of the child like civil, political, economic, social, and even cultural right (UNICEF, 2019). The World Health Organization (WHO) also cited that nonregistration of birth is affecting almost half of the children of the world (WHO, 2014). In complementing this statement regarding the developing country of Nigeria, UNICEF referenced in a report that 19.5 million children in Nigeria (or at least about 60% of the population of over two hundred million people) have no birth registration record (2017). The huge figure sends a curiosity to the mind and serves as a reason to investigate this phenomenon. Why are parents not registering their children to monitor the health, well-being, education, and financial objectives of countries locally or globally therefore, it is essential to have a sustainable and improved civil registration and vital statistics process, of which birth and death registrations are part of (Fisker et al., 2019).

It is pertinent to first understand the existing procedure that has been set by the government for birth registration vis a vis why low birth registration is still a challenge in most developing countries. With this understanding through available literature, this study can then deduce if the obstacles causing this low adoption of birth registration is inherent in the procedure. Also, what the government of these developing countries can do with the data gathered from birth registration such as create a basic system that can improve the social and economic progress of a nation (Pelowski et al., 2015), being able to set new targets for development and checking if previous programs put in place (social and economic) had made a meaningful impact. The data gathered from birth registration can help the government to do all of the above and therefore makes the birth registration a form of data gathering, an investigation that can enhance the study of academic literature and develop a theory-driven framework of the current knowledge.

Studies on birth registration in most developing countries had mentioned that most children were not registered due to reasons ranging from war, ignorance, remote location, inadequate financing by the government, systemic corruption, and deliberate attempt by parents were all discovered by studies carried out by scholars like (Maduekwe et al., 2017; Pelowski et al., 2015). In Nigeria, about 31 million children are reported to be under the age of five out of over 200 million population of the country (UNICEF, n.d.). This makes the children an important part of the population on whom the government should be focused.

According to Akande and Sekoni (2005), birth and death registration should be considered vital events that are registered not only in developed countries but in all countries of the world. A birth record is a legal requirement that gives identity to every child born anywhere in the world according to Mikkelsen, Lopez and Phillip (2015). The developing countries are not excluded from ensuring that proper record of birth is up to date and properly archived in a civil registration system, the study emphasized. Makinde et al. (2016) in their study went further to say that to afford a child the opportunity of being documented and be rightfully identified as a citizen of a country, the child must be adequately registered after birth. According to a treaty of the United Nations on human rights, Nigeria in 1990 and 1991 partook in signing and ratifying respectively the convention on the right of the child (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], 1989). In this document, registration of birth is identified as an important right of a child, therefore Nigeria is required to uphold the requirement therein by ensuring implementation of changes made to the birth registration policy is executed continuously. With the understanding and implementation of the human rights document, children should be allowed access to public social services; electricity, water, good road network, education, and health care plan by the government for its citizens

Akande and Sekoni (2005) also argued that 1 in every 3 new births of over 40 million children born in developing countries is not registered, Nigeria inclusive. The registration data has had its negligence in the country decades before the United Nations launched its focus on the importance of birth and death registration; this was observed in the work of Akesode, 1980 cited in Makinde et al. (2016). Akesode's study argued that an estimated 7.7% of births were registered in the old Western Region of Nigeria (which form the Southwestern part of Nigeria today). According to the UNICEF Nigeria report (2017), the situation today is enhanced due to improved government policies and interventions. The report further explained that part of the improvement is also accredited to the UNICEF Nigeria country program, which would run from 2018 to 2022, however, the program has suffered irregularity, given that the United Nations (2017) also argued that 62% of births were not registered as of 2017. The program according to UNICEF Nigeria annual report (2017) is giving priority to enrolment of under five children in school (reducing out-of-school children), regular immunization, reduction in early child marriage, and violence against children; all of these can only be benefited from through birth registration. Before 2017, (in 2016 specifically) a national campaign was linked to health services, this increased the registration figure upwards to about 7 million children being registered at that time. However, the constraints of lack of public awareness of birth registration importance, resources, availability of registrars and regular stock-out of birth certificates still create low registration of birth according to the annual report.

All the above mentioned indicate that the exempted children whose birth are not registered may be deprived of access to basic amenities like immunization, health care plan, school enrolment plan, and job creation plan; thus, this calls for attention in order not to deprive many children the opportunity to get registered. Ato, M.G., Ato, Ato and Ato (2005) also mentioned that children can be protected from the consequences of non-registration with an identity document that the birth registration provides. The scholars affirmed that children can be protected against consequences such as early marriage, child labour and early enlistment in the army which children whose birth are not registered can face in life later on.

In support of improving the well-being of citizens of the world, the United Nations also included in its Sustainable Development Goals, the need to register every birth on time and accurately because birth registration is considered the first step to ensuring that citizens can access justice and social services (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Report [UNSDGR], 2017). This goal is to promote the well-being of everyone, especially children; emphasizing the need for this important task to create a better and improved world. Given this importance therefore, it is critical and necessary to ensure that the right procedure that will allow the collection of birth data is formulated, implemented, monitored, and improved upon

continuously. Failure to improve the existing policy document continuously may lead to inaccurate data collection; this information is useful for demographic and social infrastructure (Maduekwe et al., 2016). Not implementing the procedure or policy improvement relating to birth registration in Nigeria will keep birth registration figures low. This can deprive several children of the basic social and economic benefits like education, immunization, clean drinking water, affordable housing, and job creation, which data from birth registration can assist to resolve. Citizens in Nigeria have the right to basic social and economic development infrastructures like their counterparts in the developed countries of Europe and America. This can be achieved if accurate citizen information and data are available to the government.

Akande and Sekoni (2005) further argued in a study that “it is therefore important to conduct further studies to identify ways forward towards improving birth and death registration in Nigeria” (p.56). Makinde et al. (2016) recommended conducting more research in the area of registration of birth and death to provide possible solutions to achieving a universal birth registration. Maduekwe et al. (2016) also supported this recommendation indicating that the available data on birth and death registration was limited. It stated that a survey that was done in 2008 by the NPopC only presented the reports for live birth, still birth and death without showing the registration of birth and death event itself, this report shows birth registration in the urban areas to be 49.8% while in rural area was 18.6% among the children under five years old.

Basis on all the above-mentioned empirical studies and the fact that most of the studies on birth registration in most developing African countries looked into the attitude, challenges, reasons or factors why births are not registered (see for example Akande & Sekoni, 2005; Pelowski et al., 2015). Thus, a need for further research as suggested is necessitated but in the area of policy and procedure which has been investigated minimally. This study will investigate the existing procedural problem and make recommendations that might ensure a lifelong procedure and process of birth registration for an improved procedure, increased birth registration, and increased data gathering.

The study will investigate how the previous improvement (if any) to the birth registration procedure had contributed to increased birth registration and make data available for government, policymakers and custodians of the birth registration procedure. Policymakers can also benefit from this data if improved and complete for their planning purpose (Akande and Sekoni, 2015) leading to improved program planning and monitoring. Therefore, continuous improvement of the procedure in a sustainable way is as important as having the birth registrations executed.



### **1.3 Aim of Research**

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the current procedure of birth registration in Nigeria to highlight the barriers to birth registration that are preventing parents from registering their children in developing sub-Saharan African countries with a specific focus on Nigeria. This Investigation will be focused on the barrier that is inherent in the procedure of birth registration between 2014 and 2019. Has there been any change to the procedure within the period being investigated that has encouraged or hindered this exercise? These changes will also be highlighted to check whether these changes made by the government to the birth registration procedure have improved the adoption of birth registration. The investigation is to help reveal the challenges or barriers with the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria and will allow the study to highlight these problems and proffer measures that can address the problem through its recommendation. The thesis aims are therefore threefold: (1) To describe the current procedure of birth registration in Nigeria while investigating the barrier to birth registration in developing countries. (2) To investigate the measures that the government had introduced to the procedure within the period of investigation that has improved the adoption of birth registration by the citizens and (3) To investigate the barriers to birth registration procedure existing in Southern and Northern Nigeria while also highlighting the similarities and differences in the two regions regarding birth registration procedure. Is the current procedure set out by the Nigerian government encouraging citizens to register their children's birth or are there some obstacles there that prevent birth registration? Have the citizens' increased the number of birth registration of children as a result of changes to the procedure during the years of investigation or not? If there have been no considerable changes, what has been the impediment and how can this be improved will be suggested in this research. For the government, the lack of availability of data presents a serious obstacle to the provision of essential services to citizens; getting the right data will improve governance policy process and citizens' provision of necessary social welfare services. The study population being investigated are children between the ages of 0-5 years, with the study setting across the Southern and Northern regions of Nigeria. The findings from the thesis will provide new insight and contribute to existing studies on improving birth registration procedures to generate increased birth registration data. It will also contribute to scientific knowledge available to researchers who want to investigate procedures of birth registration, which is currently limited in Nigeria.

The research investigates the problem in this study between the years 2014 and 2019. This period has been selected because of the increased attention given to the developing countries to improve the birth registration of children.

## **1.4 Research Question**

### **1.4.1 Main research question**

The main research question is

*What are the measures that the Nigerian Government can initiate to remove the barriers to the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5 years)?*

The main question here or what some researchers refer to as the central question in this study is descriptive. It aims to describe the barriers to birth registration generally in developing countries, sub-Saharan Africa, and Nigeria specifically. The barriers are those obstacles that are inherent in the process or procedure of registering a birth or that are generally present which hinder parents from registering their children.

The study will accentuate measures that the Nigerian government may have introduced to the current procedure of birth registration during the period that this study is investigating (2014 – 2019), and what the government can propose to eliminate the existing barriers to the procedure of birth registration. The main question has been further categorized into sub-questions to expatiate on the main question and answer the main question adequately.

Three sub-questions have been identified to answer the main question. These sub-questions are outlined below with some explanations.

### **1.4.2 Sub-Questions**

#### *1. What are the barriers to birth registration in developing countries?*

This sub question explains the general barrier that is impeding birth registration in countries that are referred to as developing nations. It aims to identify those issues that have been contributing to the low registration of children in these countries generally. This sub question will also try to explain through theoretical literature if there have been solutions proffered for the barriers in the developing countries. This sub question will be answered in the Literature review chapter with the academic literature available.

#### *2. What change(s) have occurred in the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5) in the Southern and Northern Regions of Nigeria between 2014 and 2019? Are there any differences or similarities in the birth registration procedure in Southern and Northern Nigeria?*

This sub-question will investigate the changes that have occurred to the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria and at the regional level of Southern and Northern Nigeria. Has there

been any change to the birth registration procedure in Southern and Northern Nigeria within the years this study investigates? To what extent did changes to the procedural policy assist or not to eliminate the barriers acting as a bottleneck to citizens from registering the birth of their children? This will be appraised in this sub-question. It will also describe the similarities and/or differences observed in the procedure in these two regions. This sub-question also contributes to answering the main question and will be answered in chapter 4 of the thesis.

3. *To what extent are changes aimed at removing the barriers implemented in the procedures of birth registration? (a) Is there a difference between the removal of barriers in the Southern and Northern regions?*  
*(b) If there were any changes implemented to the procedure, how do they contribute to achieving the sustainable development goal of birth registration?*

The sustainable development goal target 16.9 (UNICEF, 2017) highlights the goal of birth registration for all by 2030. The target 16.9 of the sustainable development goal did state categorically about achieving a legal identity for all which includes birth registration (United Nations Data n.d.). The changes to the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria or policy related to birth registration should therefore take this goal into account when making any variation to the birth registration procedure to ensure every child is registered and has a legal identity. This study will therefore investigate, through available literature, if there is a consideration for this in the changes that have occurred to the national procedure of birth registration in Nigeria or any of such policies. This sub-question will explain how the changes made to the policy and procedure of birth registration (if there have been any) in Nigeria aligned with the sustainable development goal target in the Northern and Southern regions. This is to ascertain if the current procedure being used is sustainable enough to increase the birth registration of children across the two regions in Nigeria. This sub-question will be answered in chapter 4.

### **1.5 Scientific and Social Relevance**

The scientific relevance of the research can be ascribed to its contribution to the body of knowledge, especially for the region that is being focused on, sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the research on birth registration improvement had looked into “completion or universal birth registration” (Williams, 2014). Few researchers in Nigeria and African countries looked into sustainable and improved procedures or processes for the regions or states to increase the registration of birth among parents.

The focus of this research can provide researchers in Nigeria and sub-Saharan African countries with a fresh perspective on birth registration procedure improvement that can further develop into other research interest areas. Also, policymakers use the result of the research to develop their policy strategies related to birth registration procedure improvement, population census, and other vital registration systems that need sustainable procedure improvement to increase birth registration in general.

The detailed information of citizens derived from birth registration which can serve as a source of relevant information for the government to plan adequately for the citizens, can be ascribed as a social relevance of the research. The government can use this data to create appropriate and timely social infrastructure, benefit and economic development that will improve the total outlook of the country in terms of wealth and development.

In the works of Williams (2014), it was suggested that further research is required to find ways of improving birth and death registration in Nigeria to ensure complete and universal registration. This indicates the relevance of any further research which explore improved ways of registering birth and data gathering for policy improvement. Therefore, the social relevance can be deduced from this, in addition to birth registration data being a government resource for allocation and planning for its citizens. This can lead to improved total wellbeing and general economic outlook of the country.

The study is structured as follows: chapter one discusses the introduction stating the context of the study. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework and answers the sub-questions in line with available academic literature on the questions. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used. Chapter 4 will discuss the policy document analysis, study setting and results. This chapter will also answer the second sub question that is related to the procedure of birth registration. Chapter 5 will be the conclusion, discussion and recommendations suggested.

## Chapter 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the academic literature material. The theoretical framework on the concept of birth registration, the birth registration procedure being used as presented in policies regarding birth registration in developing countries and our case study location, Nigeria will be explained. It is however pertinent to note that most of the literature explored in this study investigated birth and death registration but our focus in this study is on birth registration. Therefore, more focus will be on the birth registration aspect of the literature while death registration will be reviewed as the study finds it necessary.

In an attempt to elucidate the concept of birth registration procedure and its antecedent improvement, which had not received so much attention in the developing countries, the rational choice theory is deemed relevant to explain the theoretical framework of this study. A rational choice approach has been advocated as a theoretical framework to explain the need for the government to have reliable, consistent, and up to date data to plan for the social welfare of its citizens and economic improvement of the country as a whole. The study is exploring a birth registration procedure that will have minimal barriers and be sustainable to encourage increased participation of parents in the registration of children between the age of 0-5 years.

### **2. 1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 Birth Registration as a Social Problem and Rational Choice theory**

Non-registration or low registration of birth has increased investigation into the birth registration phenomenon. Failure to register the birth of children create bigger problems within the society in most developing countries. These problems are likened to social problems like poverty and homelessness (De Graaf and Wiertz, 2019), ultimately transforming into a societal problem in most developing countries and especially African countries. This phenomenon is viewed as such considering the number of children being mentioned in different studies as not being registered in most developing countries and the consequential impact of not being registered on such children.

Some Social problem proponents like De Graaf and Wiertz (2019) have described a social problem as an unintentional problem originating from an individual, whose consequences affect the larger society to become a societal problem. Social problem theory according to De Graaf and Wiertz asserts that the individual behaviour that leads to the problems not done with the intention of creating problems but due to circumstances that are beyond the control of these individuals. As De Graaf and Wiertz (2019) described in their social problem theory explanation, the birth registration phenomenon can be referenced as the unintentional

problems created by the parents who do not register their children, and this evolved via circumstances beyond the control of these parents. Such circumstances can be linked to some barriers which make it a challenge to carry out the birth registration activity.

Barriers to the birth registration activity have been identified differently in various literature. Some of such barriers have been highlighted as the distance to registration centres, cost of registration and lack of knowledge (UN, 2018; Li, Zhang and Feldman, 2010). From the perspective of the birth registration problem therefore, we can view the collection of individual behaviour of parents who do not register their children as creating a societal level problem affecting a larger portion of the society. This behaviour has consequences on the social protection of the people, the study by De Graaf and Wiertz (2019) argued. The consequences of such behaviour are reflected in the government's inability to make adequate provision for social welfare programs for the citizens because of the non-availability of citizen's data to make such adequate planning. Infrastructure development is also a possible consequence from this behaviour because the government might not be able to provide appropriate infrastructure to fit the population density. In their analysis of the social problem theory, De Graaf and Wiertz likened the behaviour of individual parents adding up to micro conditions which most times lead to a macro-outcome at the national level affecting the larger society. The scholars argued that in getting the consequences of the parents' behaviour of not registering their children under control, it will require the intervention of the government, who are herein referred to as the macro actors.

Also, the rational choice theory can be applied to this study from the perspective of parents' decisions. Applying rational choice theory assumption from the perspective of the parents making a decision to prioritize their own choice of not registering their children over the government rule of registering every child. Therefore, I will explain some other proponents of rational choice theory from this view.

Proponents of rational choice theory have tried to explain these parents' behaviour through the rational choice theory and the social theory explanation. White (2005) in the book *Advancing Family theories*, explained the connection between the rational choice theory where parents see their behaviour of not registering their children as a rational choice on their part, while also portraying it through the lens of social theory when their individual actions develop into a societal level consequence. This scholar asserts that parents choosing not to register their children perceive this action as a rational choice on their own part, these choices made can be due to lack of knowledge of the importance of birth registration or lack of appropriate knowledge on the process of registering their children. Therefore, when parents choose to make this choice, they evaluate it as being beneficial to them considering that they can avoid

the late registration fee, which the parents perceive as a burden. The theory asserts that these parents have made the most beneficial choice to them. On the side of the society however, the society lacks the provision of basic social welfare and infrastructure development which the government is unable to provide due to lack of data on citizens emanating from the collective choices made by the parents for not registering their children timely or not registering at all.

These parents as rational actors, through their collective rational behaviour will bring about an undesirable problem to the society. The outcome of their behaviour brings about greater consequences at the macro level to the entire society including the unregistered children. Such consequences are reflected in the level of poverty, joblessness, lack of adequate infrastructure and other problems that the larger society can suffer because the government is not equipped with adequate data of the population generated from birth registration. The government is equally unable to make proper planning and provisions of adequate infrastructure, for example in the area of education and health, or to solve some other problems being generated by the parents' collective rational choices.

The macro level consequences also affect the children when they become adult and require the legal birth certificate to apply for national passport or birth date verification (Makinde et al., 2016); to seek political office, or other important activities in their lives.

Ulen (1990) view on rational choice however differs. The study argues that the decision of individuals to make rational choices are sometimes dependent on the availability of information rather than a rational choice of behaviour. Relating this to the concept of this study, Ulen argues that it is possible that the citizens lack the right information, which culminated in their decision and exhibiting such behaviour of not registering their children at birth. His study argued that if the right information on the consequences of not registering children had been well explained to the citizens by the government, the citizens would make and display their rational choices differently. He referred to their behaviour as "errors" (p.g 172) on their individual part due to lack of information. Furthermore, Ulen (1990) proposes that the solution to the problem of rational choices, can be rectified through corrective policies with focus on information availability or contribution to cost of such information. Therefore, problems that originates from non-registration of children's birth like poverty, which emanates in form of denied access to health care, education, proper nutrition, housing and other benefits (Harbitz and Boekle-Giuffrida, 2009) can be resolved with macro level solutions from the government in form of policy review or improvement and sponsoring cost of advertorial messages on birth registration. As argued by Ulen (1990), corrective policies to the birth registration procedure and availability of information to the citizens, will resolve the problems being generated by the parents' collective behaviour at the micro level.

## **2. 2 Conceptual framework**

The main concept in this study is birth registration and procedure in developing countries. These concepts will be outlined in this section as it relates to available academic literature.

### **2.2.1 Birth Registration in Developing Countries**

Registration of birth is a worldwide phenomenon that has been well coordinated in most developed countries. The coordinated effort in these countries has culminated into the achievement of social and economic development agenda for the citizens, due to available citizen's data. This available data provides the government with an insight into the population to plan for, in relation to social development provision. To have an in-depth understanding of the gap in birth registration in the developing countries, the concept definition will first be ascertained.

Birth registration has been described as the official recording of the vital event called birth, which is usually carried out by the state or government agency (Todres, 2003). After the birth of a child has been legally registered, it is important and necessary to have a birth certificate as proof of registration, this is usually a requirement after a birth registration (Todres, 2003).

Another globally recognized definition which resonates with many scholars was given by UNICEF. Birth registration is defined as the official recording of a child's birth and characteristics of such birth in a civil registry which must be continuous, permanent and universal; it must also be done according to the legal requirement of the country (UNICEF, 2013). After recording, a birth certificate can be issued to the child which serves as evidence of the registration and this document allows such individuals to have a right of citizenship, right to contest election, own a national passport and other social services the document cited.

In developing countries, success of and what has been achieved with birth registration differs from the developed countries. Majority of birth in developing countries are either not registered or registered and not certified<sup>1</sup> (Dake and Fuseini, 2018). This portrays the unregistered children as "invisible" to the government, the study of Dake and Fuseini further argued. The study argued further that birth registration is low in the developing countries; Asia is cited to have the highest unregistered children globally, with half of the children from this continent never registered. The other developing countries with competing low birth registration of children under five are from Eastern and Southern Africa with 38% registration: 47% registration from the Western and Central Africa. This development in relation to unregistered children who are under five years of age, has thus generated huge attention in the developing countries where this important activity is termed low (Makinde et al., 2016; Pirlea, 2019). The

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<sup>1</sup> Births are registered with relevant authorities, but no birth certificate was collected by parents.



importance attached to the concept of birth registration has therefore been researched widely in academic literatures across the globe by various scholars and professionals in different discipline from Population sciences (Makinde et al., 2016), Public health, Law, Medicine but this thesis will discuss from Public Administration point of view in terms of policy implementation and citizens participation.

The history of registration of birth globally is old, this dates as far back as before the birth of Jesus Christ during which counting, and recording is done for every birth (Brumberg et al., 2012). According to this study, the counting and identification of the people at that time was done in the Old Testament and in countries like China, Egypt, Rome, and Greece. The study argued that birth registration commenced as far back as the 1500s in England, where birth and christening were registered in church registers in the most basic form. By 1632, the American colonists who visited England were already familiar with the recordings of the church, therefore organized a presentation of these events legally on an annual basis in Virginia. This presentation translated to the recording of birth registration to protect the lives of people and primarily for property. The study opined further that by 1639, Massachusetts took the step further by requesting the government to take over the recording of these vital events rather than the church performing the task. This culminated into birth registration becoming the responsibility of the government. Although the recording was done mainly for the purpose of collecting tax and determining military manpower availability; the acknowledgement of Egypt, an African country in this study inferred that documentation of vital events like birth registration in Africa had been with humankind for centuries.

If the recording and counting of people had been around for so long among humanity, why are developing countries struggling to have updated birth registration? Could the problem be with some barriers that are preventing citizens from registering their children? Could it be the available procedure set out by the government to register birth or there are other challenges? If challenges had been identified, are there interventions to resolve them? The emergence of these questions can initiate bigger problems facing the African nations, a social problem is being envisaged. Due to the number of children not registered in African countries and in Nigeria in particular, the children are termed invisible to the government. The government therefore lack comprehensive data to provide the necessary economic and social benefits like Health care, Education, Vaccination; with the global pandemic, the unregistered children will not be able to get Covid-19 vaccine. These children will be excluded from the government plan as they are “invisible” to the government according to a study by Dake and Fuseini, (2018). As the non-registration is creating invisibility of these children to the government in various developing countries, the children lack basic social welfare benefits due to them. The children

will therefore be excluded from having access to basic social services and development agenda of the government (Dunning, Gelb and Raghavan, 2014).

According to some studies on birth registration, examples of such from Dunning et al. (2014) and Duff, Kusumaningrum and Stark (2016), there are still about 230 million children under the age of five out there in the world who have no birth registration and another 70 million who are registered with no birth certificate. This therefore impacts children across the world negatively and developing countries of Africa in particular; these children will lack access to education, health care essentials and citizenship (Makinde et al., 2016). With the huge figure of unregistered children highlighted above and the negative impact this can have on them, we can therefore ascribe this as a social problem due to the number of people being affected. Dunning et al. (2014) argued further that the children will be deprived of the necessary requirements which can enable them access social opportunities like being able to vote, contribute to modern economic development, access public services and being legally identifiable. For the reasons highlighted above, we can understand why there has been various academic research, policy papers, non-governmental organizations involvement and policymakers' concerns regarding increasing birth registration to ensure a complete and universal registration (Dunning et al., 2014). The various studies and involvement of organizations in the drive to increase birth registration is an evidence to communicate the importance of birth registered and safeguard the children from the consequences of non-registration of birth such as invisibility of the children to the government (Duff et al., 2016; Dunning et al., 2014), statelessness and lack of citizenship (Mandy, 2019; Makinde et al., 2016)

### **2.2.2 Importance of Birth Registration**

Birth registration is considered a fundamental human right that further gives a right to health services and other development initiatives of the government (Pelowski et al., 2015). The importance of birth registration for every child can therefore be deduced from various definitions of this concept that has been highlighted in this study. With reference to available academic literature on the concept of birth registration, various reasons have been identified signifying the important of the concept: Some from the literature will be explored below.

1. The birth certificate that is generated after a birth has been registered serves as a proof of birth and has a legal backing according to the legislative pronouncement of the country, advocated Akande and Sekoni (2005). Akande and Sekoni (2005) opined further that the legal identity of a child is backed by the birth record of such child; this birth record is achieved through birth registration. We can therefore deduce from these scholars that the legal identity of any child can be proven through the registration of their birth and subsequent issuance of a

birth certificate. Brumberg et al. (2012) also advocated the importance of birth registration as ensuring the rights of the individual essentially for property. When the birth of an individual is properly registered, upon the death of such a person, there will be ease in the process to claim their property and get their death certificate.

2. Ensuring the legality of identifying a child through birth registration prevents them from being stateless and enables them to have a claim to a nationality, opined Manby (2019). A study by Owen (2018) also validates the importance of citizenship which is only possible when the issue of statelessness<sup>2</sup> has been eliminated by proper birth registration. Owen empirically emphasized that stateless individual's risk being deprived of access to resources, fundamental rights (like voting and being voted for) and a range of other privileges including legal protection from the government and having freedom of movement to other countries. The aforementioned should be conferred on citizens via their nationality and citizenship. Birth registration is therefore the gateway to ensuring statelessness is avoided.

3. Brumberg et al. (2012) in their study also emphasized that the importance of collecting birth and death information can be deduced from its use to develop data driven solutions which can help to monitor public health and public health interventions. The study cited an example in 1800 when there was a high immigration into the Northeastern part of the United States. The immigrants were mainly the poor people, and their movement created overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The study explained that the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions resulted in a serious disease outbreak, but the sanitary reformers used the available data from birth registration to monitor the health of the people and provided health interventions as a solution to the problem.

4. With birth registration comes the claim to a birth certificate which in itself is linked to lower school dropout, reduction in child trafficking exposure, reduction in child labour and improving the accessibility of registered children to basic health care services (Yihdego et al., 2020). These scholars further highlighted that an integral part of birth registration is that it serves as a key part of determining annual mortality and fertility rate, an important vital statistic for economic planning.

### **2.2.3 Barriers to Birth Registration in Developing Countries**

The concept of birth registration and the barriers affecting its actualization has been perceived as a global issue especially in developing and least developed countries of Asia and Africa. Consequently, this concept has therefore been widely investigated by scholars in developing

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<sup>2</sup> A stateless individual has been described as any individual without the citizenship of any country on the globe (Manby, 2019).

and developed countries to create awareness of the problem and proffer a workable solution. Scholars looking into legal identity, citizenship and democratic governance in Latin America and Caribbean also investigated this concept and its barriers. These scholars like Harbitz and Boekle-Giuffrida (2009) grouped barriers to birth registration into; Economic, Administrative, Cultural, Geographic and Political barriers. According to UNICEF Data (2017), various barriers also present themselves in sub-Saharan African countries making birth registration a difficult task to achieve.

Some of the barriers impeding birth registration in developing countries are according to literature are highlighted below. The developing countries selected as examples in this category are based on population and geographic location in relation to the study setting. China and Indonesia were selected due to its population size, considering that the study setting is the most populous African country. Likewise, Kenya and Cote D'Ivoire were selected as a representation of sub-Saharan African Countries. These barriers have been empirically identified as follows:

- i. ***Administrative requirement for birth Registration:*** In Indonesia, it was reported that parents must present their marriage certificate in order to register their children and obtain a birth certificate (Duff et al., 2016). The study affirmed that getting the marriage certificate cost lots of money as well as complicated documentation. The complicated documents and the cost therefore deter people from registering their marriage which in turn create a barrier for registering children of such married couples. The Study also highlighted that those parents who went ahead to register their children without the marriage certificate get issued a certificate that is specifically issued to children born out of wedlock. This creates a stigma to the child being issued the certificate. As a result of this stigma, citizens will avoid birth registration of children and they will also avoid going through the complicated procedure of obtaining necessary documents for registration, the study further explained.

Fisker et al. (2019) in their empirical study also address similar issue using the example in Guinea-Bissau, a developing country in Western Africa. They stressed that the requirement for parents to present a form of identification or state recognized identity card as a prerequisite to registering the birth of their children poses an administrative barrier for the parents concerned. The study affirmed that most adults in that country lack the identity card due to the cost of obtaining them. The study further argued that additional document that is requested is the immunization card of the child, which carries the date of birth of that child. Parents may not have access to this document if the child(ren) were born at home; this also presents a barrier to birth registration the scholars argued.

- ii. **Lack of knowledge:** Knowledge of the importance of birth registration is unknown to majority of parents due to their own lack of registration, according to UNICEF Data (2017). The report argued that these parents have no idea of the implications of not registering the birth of their children. Cote D'Ivoire in Western Africa was cited as a case study where some parents who had never been registered since birth carried on the tradition due to lack of knowledge and its importance.
- Sierra Leone, another developing Western African country cited as lacking the knowledge of the location of birth registration centers (UNICEF, 2005). This was mentioned as a barrier to registering children by their parents. In the case of Sierra Leone, knowledge of the specific location where birth registration exercise should be carried out by the citizens was the barrier being classified here.
- iii. **Cost:** This barrier prevented parents from registering their children either timely or registering them at all. Pelowsky et al., (2015) highlighted this in their study when they argued that in Kenya, 50% of the children were not registered and this is deliberate on the part of their parents. Using a controlled and intervention group in their study, they argued that the cost of registering birth in Kenya was as high as paying 150 Kenya shillings for processing (1 USD = 112.47 Ksh<sup>3</sup> and 150 ksh = \$1.33 today)<sup>4</sup> and 60 Ksh for the birth certificate. Other administrative costs like paying the nurses were also highlighted in this study. Senegal was also cited as a country that attached a cost to birth registration. It was highlighted that parents in remote villages get the option of saving transportation costs to the cities by registering their children's birth via the village chiefs who had been equipped with necessary tools to report registration of birth through mobile devices, however, parents are mandated to pay the cost of birth certificate (WHO, 2014).
- iv. **Distance to Registration centres:** The distance to offices where the birth registration centres are located serves as a barrier to citizens notably those in the rural or interior part of the country. Li, Zhang, and Feldman (2010) opined in their study that people who live in remote mountains, which is considered a remote location in China, find it difficult to commute to the urban location to register the birth of their children, with one

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<sup>3</sup> Pelowsky et al., 2015. This exchange rate was for the period between 2009 – 2013 according to the study.

<sup>4</sup> Exchange rate conversion as at the time of conducting this study in December 2021. Available at <https://www.exchange-rates.org/Rate/USD/KES>

month deadline to complete the exercise. The researchers cited the inconvenience of commuting to a long distance and the cost of transportation involved in travelling to the urban location as part of the barrier of distance to registration.

- v. **Legislative barrier.** The legislative laws of birth registration become barriers rather than guiding rules to help the citizens do the right thing according to Todres (2003). Todres in his study affirmed that some countries have legislative laws which should either be reviewed to make the birth registration process simple or completely taken off. The study cited countries that had it entrenched in their law that children can only be registered with the presence of the father. Refugees and displaced persons who find themselves in countries with such legislation will not register their children's birth as a result of this requirement; they might also not register their children due to fear of being deported or some other dangers. The study ascribed this to gender discrimination that prohibit some mothers from registering their children.

#### **2.2.4 Policies and creating a sustainable Birth Registration process**

Governments need reliable and up to date data to make provision for economic improvement, infrastructure allocation and social inclusion of its citizens. Birth registration therefore has been classified as an important source of data for planning for social services like Health care, Schools, Housing, Nutrition, and security (Makinde et al., 2016). Societies can respond to their problems; their societal and economic developments using policies to adjust and improve on changes argued Knill and Tosun (2012). Reiterating on the policy connection on the importance of birth registration data, Brumberg et al. (2012) argued birth registration was used after an occurrence of cholera pandemic in England and Wales , as a result of this, vital record began to be documented. The study cited an example in relation to health, in the example cited, birth registration data assisted with the plague and cholera management in Europe during the disease breakout in 1832.

Introducing policies to strengthen the procedure of birth registration especially in low- and middle-income countries was also cited as a way of sustaining birth registration process in continent like Asia. According to Suthar et al., (2019), a multilevel policy change in Bangladesh was implemented which involved citizens having a birth certificate (obtainable only through birth registration) to access social services like school, inheritance from the dead and registration of marriage. This policy was cited to have prompted a positive effect on birth registration leading to an increase in the number of registration and enabled the government to increase data collection. This translated to adequate allocation of social services. The empirical study also argued that some countries used penalties in their policies to change the

citizens' attitude towards increasing birth registration. Canada was stated as one of such countries that used the penalty as a policy process to increase birth registration. Therefore, replicating the same in developing countries might present the needed solution to creating a sustainable process of birth registration.

Scholars who studied the improvement process of birth registration in Fiji advocated that setting up a committee to look into the process of birth registration can be included as a policy guide to creating sustainable policies. According to Naidu, Buttsworth and Aumua (2013), the establishment of the committee in Fiji which comprises different stakeholders; like the government and the key agencies, as part of the policy process of strengthening birth registration also ensures availability of this important data for health improvement. Introducing this committee revealed an improvement in their processes as a result of the diverse ideas being brought together by the stakeholders and this was identified as part of the success story of Fiji. This in turn culminated in a higher rate of registration and available data for government planning purposes. Reiterating further on measures that have been advanced to improve the situation, the Nigerian government also set up a national policy on population for sustainable development to address improvement in standard of living of its citizens (National Policy on Population Report, [NPP] and Health Policy Project [HPP], 2015). This policy report included targets to improve population wellbeing but did not state birth registration as a strategy to collect the population data nor how to enforce implementation.

In order to measure the target, set under the SDG goals of achieving universal birth registration, which was highlighted in target 16.9, the number of 5-year-old children who had been registered in the civil registration system of their country must be ascertained (UNSDGR, 2017). Most developing countries without an up-to-date civil registration system will have a challenge meeting this target, thereby coming short of one of the United Nations sustainable goal targets of registering every birth and ensuring universal registration.

### **2.3 First sub question addressed**

In order to answer the first sub question in this chapter, which is *What are the barriers to birth registration in developing countries?* Sub section 2.2.3 has explored the theoretical literature on the barriers that are inherent to birth registration in different developing countries around the globe. This section will summarize the discussion in sub-section 2.2.3 to answer the first sub question. It is important to note that the barriers to birth registration, which might be referred to as obstacles or challenges in different developing countries, can present itself in different forms considering the diversities in the developing nations according to the literature. The barriers that the various literature have discussed in this study presents itself differently whether due to the geographical locations of the developing countries like Asia, Africa, Latin

America, or due to the cultural differences, availability of social welfare systems, country policy or the political system. Barriers to birth registration in developing countries are numerous and cannot all be presented in this study, however, those that are prevalent in different developing countries have been selected and tabulated to answer the first sub-question. In table 2-1 below are some of the barriers affirmed in the literature.

Table 2-1: Outline of Identified Barriers in Developing Countries

Barriers Identified		Countries	Notes
1	Administrative Barrier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage certificate document.</li> </ul> <b>Duff et al. (2016).</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National ID Card.</li> </ul> <b>Fisker et al. (2019)</b>	Indonesia  Guinea-Bissau	Marriage certificates and National ID cards were highlighted as a requirement for parents in order to register their children. Most parents do not possess this document because of the cost of obtaining it.
2	Geographical Barrier:  Distance to registration centre  <b>UNICEF Data (2017).</b>	Côte D'Ivoire	The distance from the rural to the Urban area where most birth registration offices are situated poses a barrier to the citizens of this developing country.
3	Economic Barrier:  Cost of obtaining the certificate.  <b>Pelowsky et al. (2015).</b>	Kenya	A certain amount has to be paid for processing and obtaining a birth certificate in Kenya. This amount is as high as 210 Kenya shillings (KSh), this is equivalent to about \$1.96 as at today. Although the study opined that those who live in remote areas have the option of registering birth through village chiefs, the cost of birth certificate still has to be paid while they save the cost of transportation to the city.
4	Information Barrier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Knowledge.</li> </ul> <b>Li, Zhang and Feldman (2010)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Location.</li> </ul> <b>UNICEF (2005)</b>	China  Sierra Leone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents who had never been registered themselves did not have the knowledge of the importance of birth registration since they themselves were never registered, therefore did not see the significance of the birth registration for their children.</li> <li>• The location where to register the children was not known to some parents. This created a barrier which prevented some</li> </ul>



			parents in Sierra Leone from registering their children.
5	Institutional Procedures barrier. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Procedure</li> </ul> <b>Manby (2019)</b>	Morroco  Egypt	<p>The procedure to be followed by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in these two countries creates a barrier that either prevents these sets of people from registering or delays the registration of their children. In both countries, a marriage certificate is a prerequisite to birth registration. Also, evidence of residence permit is required from migrants which makes it difficult for some migrants to register their children.</p> <p>Parents are expected to provide evidence of connection between the child and the parents, for example through a birth notification. For refugees who had fled their country for various reasons, this might be an impossible document to obtain, thereby creating a barrier to registering their children.</p>

**Source: Researcher's composition, 2021.**

From table 2-1 above, the barriers presented therein which can be Administrative, Economic, Geographical and Information possess a challenge to parents in registering birth of their children and obtaining a birth certificate which guarantee the legal identity of the child. A child's identity is as important as the child's citizenship and preventing statelessness. Therefore, acquiring nationality through birth registration will create economic, political, and social opportunities for the child. This assist to control social issues like poverty, child labour or early marriage.

## Chapter 3 : METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Overview

This chapter explains the methodology of data gathering in this study and the Research design applied in the study. The research design will be explained, followed by study setting and unit of analysis, scope of the study and data collection method used. The chapter further explained the core concept used in this study which were derived from the Literature review chapter, the limitation in terms of the research design, method, and ethical issues.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the current procedures of birth registration in Nigeria with the aim of highlighting the barriers with birth registration that are preventing parents from registering their children in developing sub-Saharan African countries with specific focus on Nigeria. The study aims to investigate if there has been any change to the procedures within the period being investigated which has encouraged or hindered this exercise. The study aims to investigate if the current procedure can increase adoption of birth registration by parents. The increase in birth registration adoption will provide requisite data for the government for policy development, to achieve societal development for the citizens, especially children between 0-5 years of age.

Nigeria has been selected as a case study from the sub-Saharan African region to be investigated due to its population size. Secondary data has been selected to be used for the study and the choice of this selection will be explained. The limitations of the study and ethical considerations will be explained in detail.

The study was initially designed to investigate the problem using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods with focus groups and interviews to be conducted. As a result of the outbreak of the pandemic Covid-19 and researcher's inability to visit the study setting location, a refocus using secondary data was advised.

Current procedures in registering children in Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria will be investigated in this study. The researcher will also investigate if there are similarities and/or differences in the procedures or processes used for birth registration in the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria in this study.

The national policies on birth registration in the two regions will be analyzed. This can be compared to another sub-Saharan African country to investigate policies that might increase birth registration through a sustainable procedure or process.

Table 3-1: Research outline

Research Method.	Secondary Research Method.	
	Websites	Web Resource
	Website of national population Commission in Nigeria	University of Twente Library Resources.
	Websites on Information on Birth Registration	Past thesis from University of Twente archives.
	Websites of UNICEF Nigeria, UNICEF International, World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank (WB), African Union on the Right and Welfare of Children, United Nations.	
	National Policy documents on Birth Registration in Nigeria. Policy documents from United Nations on Birth Registration	

**Source: Researcher's Diagram, 2021**

### 3.2 Research Design

In this study, the case study method is deployed to answer our research question. The research design is a descriptive and qualitative method; this further explains how and what will be used to answer the research question and sub questions. The case study option was selected because it will enable us to describe the procedures and process used in birth registration in the country selected for analysis while exploring the experiences in the different regions of our case study contributing to increased information in investigating the problem.

As a result of a refocus from using both primary and secondary data gathering, secondary data is currently selected as the main focus of this research due to limitations that will further be explained in this chapter. Existing literature on birth registration, procedures and processes of birth registration, and existing national policy documents will be analyzed in the study. Also, policy document analysis between existing national policies in Southern and Northern Nigeria will be looked at to check if there is a deviation in adherence to the national policy documents.

Content analysis will be used in the empirical analyses of the policy documents that are available for birth registration procedure in Nigeria. The main analysis will be performed on the

Birth, Death, ETC (Compulsory Registration) Act [1992 No 69]. Other policy documents that complimented a change to the main legislative documents regarding the procedure of birth registration; for example, the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), Multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS), United Nations policy documents on birth registration in Nigeria and policy documents on sustainable development goals in relation to birth registration will be analyzed according to its relevance to the analysis.

The core concepts of birth registration identified in the literature review chapter will be defined for in depth understanding of its relevance to the birth registration concept in this chapter.

In answering the central question and sub questions, policy documents and academic literature will be explored. The policy document to be used in the study will date back to the last 20 years or more; the rationale for this is the use of secondary data which permits wider range of documents usage and accentuate insightful information and empirical documents analysis.

### **3.3 Study Setting**

In this study, due to time constraint and other limiting factors that will be elaborated in the limitation section; our study setting is Nigeria while the unit of analysis are the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria.

Nigeria is a developing country in the sub-Saharan, Western region of the African continent. The population of the country is currently estimated to be about 207, 768, 444 (Worldometer, n.d.). Considered as a fast-developing nation in terms of population, Nigeria has the bulk of its population as children and young people (De Graaf and Wiertz, 2019). This assertion was corroborated in a report of UNICEF Nigeria that put the current estimate of children under 5 years of age in Nigeria to about 31 million. It is also reported in the same document that about 46% of the population are under 15 years of age, thereby referring to the nation as “the country of the young” (UNICEF Nigeria, n.d.-a, p.1). This statement is further corroborated from the #ENDSARS protest led by the young people of the country in support of ending police brutality directed at young people in the country (Ojewale, 2020) and its antecedent abolition of that sector of the police unit. With a youthful population, it is ideal to investigate the possibility of a change to the birth registration procedure in the country by starting with the youngest people in the country (age 0-5).

The country has been structured into the Southern and Northern region since its independence and it became a sovereign nation on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. Prior to the merger of the two regions, Northern and Southern Nigeria were a separate entity. In 1914, the Northern and Southern part of Nigeria were amalgamated and became a protectorate (Salawu and Hassan, 2011). The Southern and Northern regions are officially sub divided into South-East, South-West, South-South (Southern Region) and North-East, North-Central, North-West (Northern Region)

for resource allocation, ethnic classification, and electoral management (Ikenwa, 2020). Nigeria is classified as a Federal Republic with a Federal capital referred to as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) sited in Abuja, 36 states and 774 local government areas in the country which covers a land area of about 910,770km<sup>2</sup> (Worldometer n.d; Ikenwa, 2020). The countries' GDP as at 2020 was \$432.294 (World Factbook, CIA n.d; WB Data, n.d). The official national language of the country is English which is used for most business transactions, used for teaching in schools and other interactions. Aside from the official language, there are three major national languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Within these three languages are different ethnic groups with about 374 local dialects (Salawu and Hassan, 2011). As such, the country can be referred to as a plural society with multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multi-religion argued Salawu and Hassan (2011).



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria.

**Capital :** Abuja

**Population :** 203.5million (estimate)

**Language:** English (official)

**Life Expectancy:** 59.3 years

**Source:** Nigeria: Current Issues and US Policy

Table 3-2: Composition of the Southern and Northern Region

**Source:** State classification on the Nigeria Government Website, 2020.

<b>Regions and their composition.</b>	
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>Northern Region</b>
South-South: Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers State, Delta, Edo, and Rivers States.	North -Central: Benue, FCT, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau States.
South-East: Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo State.	North-East: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States.
South-West: Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti and Osun State.	North-West: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara State.

<https://fmiti.gov.ng/index.php/184-diversifying-africa-s-largest-economy>

The above table 3-2 displays the composition of the states that makes up each of the Southern and Northern regions of Nigeria. The registration of birth is coordinated by the NPopC who ensures that the same procedure is deployed to all the Southern and Northern regions of the country comprising the 36 states of the Federation. Whether or not there is uniformity in the procedure of birth registration or differences is what this study will also investigate.

The NPopC has its presence in all the 36 states of the country and the federal capital territory Abuja. Within the respective states, the NPopC have representative offices in respective local governments within the city and some remote areas. This is to ensure citizens can access the birth registration offices at their convenience.

### 3.4 Scope of the Research

The research seeks to investigate the current procedure of birth registration in Nigeria with the aim of highlighting the barriers with birth registration procedure that are preventing parents from registering their children in developing sub-Saharan African countries with specific focus on Nigeria. The study investigates the procedure of birth registration in Southern and Northern Nigeria of children between the ages of 0-5 years, with focus on the year 2014 - 2019. The aim is the possibility of creating a sustainable and continuous data collection method which the government can use for policy development and to provide for the socio-economic well-being of the citizens, especially children.

What are the procedures currently for birth registration in the two regions in Nigeria? What improvements of the procedure (if any) has contributed to helping the government to achieve an increase in birth registration? This is in terms of government having adequate data of the citizen for improve social welfare provision, healthcare, and education (by having access to

available data that helps with proper policy planning). Since it is unclear till date, what amount of progress has been made to achieve a universal birth and death registration in the country (Makinde et al., 2016), a continuous search for improvement through research is inevitable.

The scope of the research will be limited to Southern and Northern Nigeria due to manageability of these units of analysis. Gathering data from these units of analysis can be a representation of the country Nigeria rather than with over 1.1 billion inhabitants of continental region of sub-Saharan Africa. (World Population Review, 2020). The chosen country is considered one of the commercial nerve centre of Africa, most populous, prosperous with natural resources and the rest of the African regional government therefore might be able to adopt and pay attention to issues occurring in this country. Therefore, if the sustainable procedure to improve birth registration works in Nigeria, its adoption might be welcome elsewhere in Africa, a continent that is struggling with birth registration completeness. A study reported that only 10% of Africans live in an African country where the birth registration is termed to be complete (Makinde et al., 2016).

Within the chosen case study, the scope has been limited to the Northern and Southern part of Nigeria due to the recognition of the two regions by the country, and the research investigation can be better managed rather than with the 36 states of the federation (which also has about 774 local government areas). This selection might help reduce bias in our result. The Southern region consist of 17 states while the Northern region consist of 19 states. The federal capital territory which is the nation's capital is situated in the Northern part of the country, therefore, for the purpose of this study, the nation's capital will be classified under the Northern region making the total states under this region 20 in total. Population sample from individual states will not be considered for the study any longer for this study due to adoption of secondary data for the investigation of the problem.

Resource and logistics are factors that might limit the research within the scope that has been chosen. If the researcher must travel to all the above-mentioned states within the Northern and Southern region to conduct interviews and administer questionnaires, a lot of resources would have been expended. The COVID-19 pandemic also poses a challenge to primary data gathering in Nigeria because of travel restrictions within the country, therefore the researcher considered using secondary data available in the public domain which contrasted with the initial plan of conducting interviews and using questionnaires. Although the researcher did some focus groups with some mothers at the initial stage of the research to kick start the primary data gathering, that will no longer be used to add useful information to this study. Also, one interview was conducted over the phone with a staff of the National Population

Commission (NPopC) in one of the Northern regions' states of the country (Kwara state in North Central to be precise), this key informant data might be considered if it will provide a useful information to the secondary data.

### **3.5 Data collection method and sources**

Data source that will be used in the study is predominately secondary data in the form of available literature on birth registration in developing countries and Nigeria, policy documents on birth registration in developing countries, Africa and Nigeria in specific, information on birth registration from the websites of United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), website of the World Bank (WB), website of the World Health Organization (WHO), website of the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria (NBS) and any related websites with detailed information on birth registration and procedure in sub-Saharan African countries which is relevant to the study.

The secondary data collection used for the literature review is done through a desk search on the University of Twente database, Google scholar, public accessible information on the website of the Nigerian Population Commission (NPopC), websites of the relevant organizations stated above for policy documents and research papers on birth registration in the international domain, in Africa and Nigeria.

As the study progresses, new information is also gathered through journal articles, NPopC in Nigeria and the National Identity Management Commission of Nigeria (NIMC); a new agency set up to handle the allocation of identity number to the Nigerian citizens (generally referred to as social security number). In addition, vital information on birth registration procedure will be incorporated into the study as it progresses. The introduction of new data is relevant due to the increased rate at which data and research is being introduced as a result of the global attention to developing countries' birth registration improvement.

Search strategy on birth registration using keywords like birth registration, civil registration, vital statistics, procedure, vital registration, birth record were used to generate relevant academic journals. This was done using the University of Twente search database, Google Scholar, JStor and other credible online digital libraries.

Policy papers were selected based on its relevance to the research topic. The policy papers are those available on the website of the government organization in Nigeria in charge of birth registration; the National population commission (NPopC), websites of United Nations, WHO, World bank and other relevant agencies focused on improving the concept of birth registration. Table 3-3 highlight the selection criteria of the policy papers selected for use.



Table 3-3: Policy document selection criteria

<b>Policy papers included</b>	<b>Policy Papers excluded</b>
1. Policy Papers from the National government in Nigeria on birth registration and population.	Policy papers from state and local government in Nigeria.
2. Policy documents from the United Nations with relevance to birth Registration in developing countries.	United Nations policy document without reference to birth registration in developing countries.
3 Policy documents from African Union with Reference to birth Registration.	African Union policy documents without reference to birth registration.
4 Policy Documents from World Bank with reference to birth registration in developing countries.	World bank policy documents without reference to birth registration in developing countries.
5 Policy Papers in English	Policy papers in Nigerian local languages (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo)

**Source: Researchers composition, 2021**

A total of about 1, 217 articles were returned from the search strategy in the course of search for relevant literature on birth registration, barrier, and procedure improvement. This was narrowed down to 156 articles based on close relevance to developing countries, specific search strategy concept of birth registration and accessibility of the journals online.

The main policy papers selected for analysis in this study are

- I. The Birth, Death, ETC (COMPULSORY REGISTRATION) Act of 1992 (BRA,1992).
- II. The Nigerian Demographic Health Survey of the year 2018 (NDHS): The NDHS of the year 2018 was selected to be analyzed alongside the BRA as a result of the published year being within the time frame that this study is being investigated.
- III. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016 – 2017(MICS5): The MICS5 is the fifth in the series, as such the acronym MICS5. The selection is based on the survey year falling within the period being investigated in this study.
- IV. Implementation of the SDGs; A National Voluntary Review (2017): This document is selected to review the SDG target as it relates to birth registration and its alignment to the policy change or adjustment in relation to fulfilling target 16.9 of the SDG. The published year of the article is within the purview of the study investigation.
- V. Nigeria's 2004 National policy on population for sustainable development; Implementation Assessment Report (2015). The selection of this document is centered

around its assessment of the SDG goal target 16.9 with reference to birth registration and its implementation in the country. Year of publication falls within the purview of this study's investigation timeline.

### **3.5.1. Secondary Data**

Secondary research involves the use of existing literature on a selected topic of research to investigate the problem. Using secondary data can be beneficial for the following reasons:

(1) It gives the researcher the opportunity to have a greater scope on the study rather than the limited data that can be collected by a single researcher in the course of investigating a problem using primary data.

(2) It saves time and resources. In this study, it saved time and the researcher from the travel difficulty inherent with Covid-19 pandemic and travel ban.

(3) The researcher has access to both national and international research materials and can benefit from worldwide materials. According to Boslaugh (2015), secondary data can assist to study issues over multiple year periods at both national and international level. This will be of benefit to this study in consideration of the multiple year periods being investigated, that is between 2014 and 2019.

Inclusive to the academic literature explored are gray literature. This assists to have a uniform view of the available materials for investigation in your research reported Paez (2007). Gray literatures have been referred to as literature materials that are of production on all government levels, business, academics, or industries which are either in prints or electronic format and are not commercially controlled by publishers (Paez, 2017). Gray literatures have been included as a result of the topic of research that has enormous material that can be consulted in the non-academic domain such as the United Nations, World Bank, and other non-governmental organizations of repute.

The use of secondary data will involve using information and reports from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)<sup>5</sup>, textbooks, publications on websites of Institutions related to the study, magazines, white paper reports. However, careful selection of these sources will be based on quality, relevance to the research study and objectivity in selection choice because there might have been bias from the original data analyst which can be attributed as a weak side of secondary data. According to Ibert, Baumard, Donada and Xuereb (2001), secondary data collection can be internal or external. These scholars opined that internal data are those that

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<sup>5</sup> NGOs like PLAN International, Save the children and other NGO's alike reports will be used for the study.

have been produced by organizations or individuals privately which is not tailored to the researchers needs specifically while external data are those secondary data available in the public domain like the libraries, document centres etc. For example, using the data from National Population Commissions of Nigeria (NPopC) in this study can be considered as using internal secondary data and the use of peer reviewed journal available from the university domain can be ascribed to external secondary data.

Policy papers that are available in Nigeria will be compared using secondary data. If there are different policy documents available in the Northern and Southern part of Nigeria, this can also be analyzed with secondary data. If there is a single policy document related to birth registration in the country, then this single document will be analyzed only. Comparing the policy documents available on birth registration in a chosen sub-Saharan African country or the international domain with the national policy document available in Nigeria can also be possible with secondary data.

In the course of this study, the policy papers that are being analyzed will be obtained online due to restricted access to travel to the study location. Direct enquiries to make available the policy documents on procedure of birth registration were sent to the NPopC via email and the commission's website but no response was received. Therefore, the researcher made use of policy documents available on the website of the NPopC and what is available in the public domain. Therefore, policy documents that are currently available in Nigeria within the time frame that is being investigated in this study will be perused.

### **3.6 Core Concept of Birth Registration**

The core concepts outlined below are the basic concepts related to the broad concept of birth registration that the study has identified in the literature review chapter. These concepts are hereby defined for in-depth understanding as they relate to the broad concept of birth registration and its application in this study.

In relation to birth registration procedure, core concepts identified and outlined are those related to vital event registration, its legal procedure, processes of registering a birth and all that is related to it. The core concepts definitions are important in order to understand its relevance and relationship to the birth registration concept and procedure of birth registration. Concepts featured in the policy documents which are similar to the core concepts of the study but not defined in the methodology section, will be explained in the data analysis section.

1. **Birth Registration:** Different scholars and documents have tried to define this concept for in-depth understanding and its application to solving emerging challenges related to the concept. This has been defined as the official recording of a birth of a child which

is done by the state and assigned to be carried out by a certain part of the government (Ato, Ato, Ato, and Ato, 2005). In addition, UNICEF (2007) emphasized that this recording is permanent and gives identity to the person whose information has been documented. It also shows the link of family ties as well as serving as a proof of an individual's birthplace thereby showing nationality and helping to eliminate statelessness<sup>6</sup> (World Bank [WB], 2016). Birth registration can be measured through the birth records, or a ledger designated for that purpose, this is the document holding the important information collected from birth parents about the birth event.

After a registration has been done, a birth certificate<sup>7</sup> is issued to authenticate the completion of the birth registration process and act as a legal proof of birth. Birth registration has also been identified as an important tool of public health because the available data on registered live birth can help the government to make the right health policies and allocate adequate resources to health (Brumberg et al., 2012).

2. **Death Registration:** This is the official recording of death which is carried out by government agencies within the state of respective countries. In Nigeria, death registration is carried out by families of the deceased via the NPopC<sup>8</sup> offices. The death registration can be measured through the death register or ledger provided for such purpose where information about the deceased had been entered. A death which occurred at the hospital is certified by a medical practitioner where the death occurred and a medical cause of death is issued (Makinde et al., 2020). According to the study by Makinde et al. (2020), the cause of death is required to be presented to the NPopC before a death certificate can be issued. In cases where a death occurs at home (that is outside a hospital), the last medical personnel who attended to the dead person is required to issue the cause of death and medical certificate to certify such person dead, the study explained. Furthermore, the study expatiated that this process is not complied with in Nigeria as family members can bypass the medical practitioners and go straight to the NPopC to obtain a death certificate that will enable them to have a burial certificate to bury their loved ones. Culture and religion were cited in this study as part of the reasons why registration of death is low; citing Islam where the dead had to be buried on the same day. The rigour and period to receive the document for burying the corpse makes citizens boycott the process completely, the study further explained.

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<sup>6</sup> This refers to a situation where a person does not legally belong to any nation as a result of not being registered at birth as a citizen of any recognized nation.

<sup>7</sup> A sample copy of a Nigerian birth certificate is in Appendix A

<sup>8</sup> National Population Commission of Nigeria

3. **Procedure:** This term has been defined by the Cambridge dictionary as “a set of actions that is the acceptable way of doing something” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., Definition 1). This is the structured and legal way that has been approved by the authorizing body to carry out birth and death registration in the different regions of the country. The procedure on birth and death registration in Nigeria is entrenched in the Nigeria Birth and Death etc. (Compulsory Registration) Act of 1992 (Makinde et al., 2020). This is the national rule designated for citizens in both the Northern and Southern part of Nigeria and adherence to the procedure is required in the event of birth or death that has occurred within the sovereign territory. The Nigeria Birth and Death etc. (Compulsory Registration) Act of 1992<sup>9</sup> is specific about who is authorized to register the child, the government official designated to register and issue a certificate, what information is to be submitted for registration among other important procedural steps that is required. A copy of the page containing the important information regarding birth registration procedure can be found in Appendix B.
4. **Birth Register:** This is the official register for recording of birth events in a designated book that is provided for that purpose at the hospital or designated government offices. The birth register, as specified in the BRA (1992) should include information as shown in table 3-4 below.

Table 3-4: Legislative Information contained in the Birth Register

Legislative Registration Information	Legislative Registration Information for live birth	Legislative Registration Information for stillbirth
Child's Name	Child's Name	Sex of child
Date of Birth	Date of Birth	Date of Stillbirth
Place of birth	Full Address of Place of birth	Full Address of Place of birth
Type of birth	Sex of child	Mother's Full Name
Mother's Full Name	Mother's Full Name	Mother's current Address of Residence.
Mother's current Address of Residence	Mother's current Address of Residence.	
Mother's Age		
Mothers Nationality		

<sup>9</sup> Birth, Death (Compulsory Registration) Act, 1992 (BRA) will from this point use the abbreviation BRA which will represent the acronym for Birth Registration Act.

Mother's Occupation		
Mother's marital status		
Father's Full Name		
Father's current Address of Residence		
Father's age		
Father's Nationality		

**Source: Birth, Death ETC (Compulsory Registration) Act of Nigeria 1992, No 62.**

5. **Birth Certificate (BC):** This is the legal document issued to parents when a certain birth has been registered with the designated government agency. It is a proof of birth and legal identity (UNICEF, 2019). Issuing a birth certificate is the next step after registering a birth and this is considered evidence for the government to legally recognize the existence of the child (UNICEF, 2007). According to Brumberg et al. (2012), the birth certificate started its certification as a legal document for citizenship determination during World War II, at the time when births had to be registered as a prerequisite to get employed. From World War II till date, this document still holds its importance. UNICEF (2007) argued further that in some developed countries around the world, where the government provide child support to families; for example, in the United States, United Kingdom and the Netherlands, social welfare provision is tied to birth certificate availability. Birth certificate is therefore an inevitable document that is derived from birth registration. In Nigeria, as at the time of this research, children born before 1992 cannot obtain a copy of their birth certificate. However, a birth attestation letter is allocated to those born before 1992 because the coverage of the Birth, Death e.t.c Act of 1992 that created the NPopC is limited to this time (Birth Registration Act, 1992). A copy of a Nigerian birth attestation can be found in Appendix C.
6. **Vital event:** This is the actual occurrence of a live birth, death or fetal death<sup>10</sup> according to the United Nations principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System [UNPRVSS] (2014). The principle further specifies that there are also vital events like marriages, divorce, separation, and registered partnership as dual events which occur simultaneously in the life of an individual. In most African countries, registering these vital events is at the lowest compliance except for countries like South Africa, Mauritius and Seychelles who have been able to achieve more than 90% registration of vital events like birth and death registration (Gerenne and Cantrelle, 2017).

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<sup>10</sup> This is used in this study to include legally induced abortion and still birth.

7. **Vital Record:** A record of vital events like birth, death, marriages, and other important events that the government keeps for national development and data collection, can be in digital or paper form. Suthar et al., (2019) highlighted the usefulness of this record when they argued that it helped the citizens in Utah, United States to get their death registered and obtain a certificate timely due to the digitalization of the record. The study also asserted that it reduced the time and resources spent by government registrars which in turn saved resources and improved resource allocation for the government.
8. **Civil Registration:** This involves the writing down of vital activities that have occurred in the country with the assurance of making it an activity that is permanent, uninterrupted by any government and comprehensive in nature (WHO and World Bank, 2014). The clarity of this activity is widely referred to as universal registration. The study explained that these vital activities are itemized as birth, death, marriage, divorce, and adoption. Civil registration is considered the best source of vital statistics. A distinction between the civil registration as a source of vital statistics and the vital statistics itself as a data set for policy planning has however been suggested (UNPRVSS, 2014). According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [UNECA], (2017), p.1), civil registration is considered an “essential administrative system in modern society.” With emphasis in the report on administration and modern society. From the administrative point of view, the government of today will benefit from having the essentials to plan and monitor any social program that has been implemented using civil registration.
9. **Vital Statistics / Vital statistics system:** This term refers to the actual collation of the vital events (explained above as death, birth or fetal death) that has occurred in the life of an individual (United Nations, 2014). Data uploaded in the vital statistics system is derived from Vital events<sup>11</sup>; Birth, Death, Fetal death, Adoption, Marriage, Divorce, Separation, Legitimation, Annulment, Recognition (UNPRVSS, 2014). The Vital statistics system of any country serves as the foundation for the official statistics for vital events like birth, death, fetal death, marriages, and divorce (Blumberg et al., 2012). In Nigeria however, the vital events that are being captured into the vital statistics systems are mainly birth, death, and marriages, not much focus is on adoption and divorce. The vital statistics can be referred to as a public good due to no incentive being attached to its compilation by the government and its useful for the public. A good example of the usefulness and importance of the Vital statistics system is its ability to

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<sup>11</sup> A list of the definitions of these Vital events is attached to the Appendix D.

gather relevant data on the cause of death and infectious diseases, which policymakers can use to make necessary health policies in the health sector (Mahapatra et al., 2007).

**10. Vital Registration System:** This has been described as an orderly process that has been created to complement dependable vital events. The data collection here is continuous and permanent in nature and must be done according to the legal requirement of the country involved (Salawu, 2009). These vital events featured in this study are birth, death, marriage, divorce, adoption. Vital registration is considered an important and very reliable source of gathering demographic data and creating a database that is useful for socio-economic planning by the government (Umar cited in Salawu, 2009).

**11. Statelessness:** This is a condition where citizens or nationals are not legally recognized as nationals of any country; meaning they do not belong to any country of the world; they are stateless (Manby, 2019). Many further argued that although the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of statelessness did state that a child should acquire the nationality of the country where he/she was born, there is yet to be a requirement in international law recognizing territories where children are born as their nationality. Therefore, the issue of statelessness will continue to persist. Being stateless deprives one of a nationality. A stateless person cannot be registered at birth as a result of no recognition given to the child the study further stated. A stateless person also risks being deported from any country and becoming homeless due to their stateless status; this stateless status is derived from no connection to any country, Manby (2019) explained in the study.

The data analysis chapter will check for the existence of all the core concepts that have been defined above in the policy papers that will be analyzed. The core concept “statelessness” will not be checked because the content of the policy document is more in tune with population development policies and improving birth registration as a sustainable goal. From the above listed core concepts, all will be applied in the data analysis chapter by checking for their mention in the policy documents that have been selected for analysis. This is to investigate their relevance to the concept of birth registration and how they have been applied in the different policy papers selected. Do they imply the same information as they have been used in these policy papers or not? This will be an insightful discovery to the relevance of these concepts.

### **3.7 Limitations**

It is pertinent to indicate the limitations encountered in the cause of carrying out this study. In this study, the choice of carrying out the study within the two regions in the country rather than



selecting states within these regions pose a limitation to this study. Selecting some states within the region to carry out a survey using primary data gathering might have increased the information available for analysis of the study, thereby making a mix data gathering more robust. That is using both primary and secondary data at the same time. Also using the available secondary data on the topic of this study was challenging due to limited or close to non-existence of study in Nigeria and around Africa that had been focused on birth registration procedure and the barriers inherent in such procedures.

Using available secondary data might not be devoid of bias as the original researcher who carried out their own study might have a different purpose of study from this current research; however, this study is able to benefit from some of the data gathered from available information on such secondary data. It is possible that the due diligence done by the researchers during their investigation might have been tailored differently and thus different from what is required for this particular study. The ethical requirement for the secondary data used might also differ from this study. For example, the researcher might give preference to literature from certain authors or might already want the result of the research to have a specific outcome thereby tailoring all investigation towards the outcome they have predicted.

The period selected for the research (2014-2019) was selected based on the assumption that there will be more recent occurrences in terms of policy update, procedural adjustment and government intervention in increasing data gathering through birth registration. This is assumed to be executed by way of making favorable and easier procedures accessible to the citizens as a guideline to follow.

## Chapter 4 : DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter describes the analysis of the policy document adopted for birth registration in Nigeria. The main policy document being analyzed in this chapter is the Birth, Death ETC (Compulsory Registration) Act of 1992 (No 62). This Act is the legislative framework adopted for the country's birth registration procedure. The other documents selected for analysis were carefully selected to include only those that describe or mention the measures that the government has adopted to bridge the barriers identified with birth registration in Nigeria. The selected papers also include some that discuss the sustainability of birth registration and how the concept can be achieved for all children. Inclusively, the policy documents mention some of the core concepts described in the methodology chapter on birth registration in Nigeria and this added value to the selection.

To analyze the birth registration procedure document titled "Birth, Death ETC (Compulsory Registration) Act of 1992 (No 62)" and other policy documents which serves to improve and strengthen this legislative Act of birth registration, it is pertinent to understand the historical perspective of the concept of birth registration because it serves as an introduction into the emergence of the Birth Registration Act. Some of the core concepts defined in the methodology chapter are described in the documents used for the history of birth registration, therefore, highlighting the relationship and existence of these core concepts in the policy documents.

### 4.1 History of Birth registration in Nigeria

Globally, the need to uphold the rights of the most vulnerable in society; **the children**, has been receiving increased attention. So also, is the need to cater for their social and economic needs particularly through social welfare provision. To recognize the existence or identity of a child in any society, a birth must occur which has to be legally registered (UNICEF, 2020). This is the requirement to get a birth certificate issued to a child. Each registration of death also provides the government with information about those that are alive, their inclusion in infrastructure allocation, policy and the planning decision of the economy. Cause of death, which is generated from the death registration can increase government awareness of the outbreak of a certain disease. Providing data on the birth and death of citizens of any country is as important today as it was centuries ago when registrations of birth were needed mainly for labour purposes. Currently, this information or data can also be used for economic planning and development (Tobin et al., 2013). It is worthwhile to mention that the planning aspect of the economy, health, or provision of social infrastructure for the welfare of the citizens is an important aspect of Public Administration of any government in any given country. Data collected from registration of birth can help to achieve this important exercise for the government. According to scholars such as Tobin et al. (2013), the quality and standard of

birth registration were below the required expectation in most developing countries. As a result of this issue, most birth and death go unregistered thereby creating negative consequences in the economic planning and development of such countries highlighted Tobin et al. (2013). Emphasis is therefore focused on the fact that data should be made available, up to date and be accessible for the economic planners; that is those responsible for making policies in relation to record keeping of birth. If this is done effectively and in a sustainable manner, the reciprocal effect of positive development is bound to be experienced in such a country through process and policy improvement.

An attempt at registering birth and death was first made known in Nigeria in 1863 when ordinance 21 of the Lagos colony was enacted but there was no record of any event until the year 1892 (Makinde et al., 2016). In the same year in 1892, collection of vital statistics which includes birth, death registration, marriage registration and divorce registration were made compulsory in the Lagos colony of the Western Region (Akesode, 1980 cited in Makinde et al., 2016). The study reported that the exercise was successful, this made it possible to introduce the same birth registration method in other colonies like Warri in 1903 and Calabar in 1904 respectively (Makinde et al., 2016). The study further argued that at the time, birth registration was limited to the township colonies but a form or the other of recording every birth and death had already been in place in other smaller villages which were coordinated by the village chiefs. Nevertheless, the whole country could not benefit from a universal system of registration. To buttress this point, some scholars stated that birth registration compliance in sub-Saharan Africa (Which Nigeria is part of) and South Asia is still below 50% completeness in children under 5 years of age especially in rural areas (Makinde et al., 2016 and Pirlea, 2019).

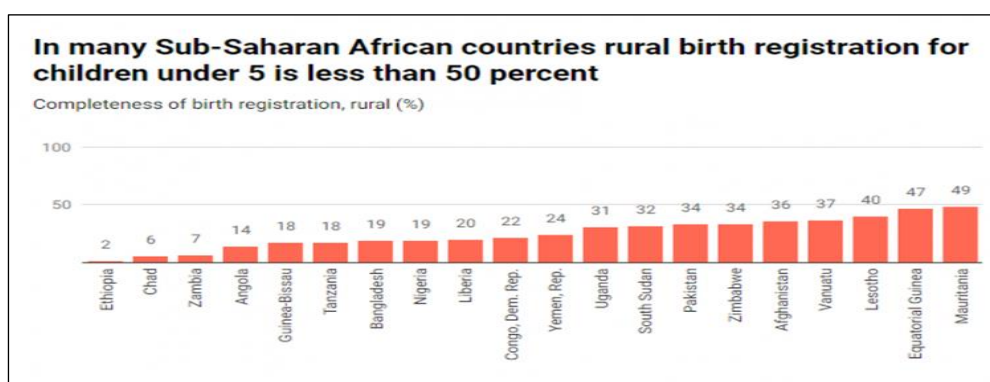


Figure 2: Birth registration is less than 50% in many African countries

**Source :** Pirlea, 2019. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/birth-registration-less-50-many-african-countries>

The United Nations (2017) through its sustainable development goal (SDG) report conveyed specifically that sub-Saharan Africa was at 46% completeness in 2016 while Nigeria was at 47% and 38% completeness in 2017 and 2018 respectively (World Bank Data, n.d.). This signifies that the registration of birth is still far below expectation considering also that the United Nations SDG, designed as a road map for nations to achieve a better and sustainable future, has one of its visions as “achieving good health and wellbeing for all by 2030” (UNSDG Report, 2017; 2019; 2020).

Target 16.9 of the sustainable development goal specifically mentioned being able to provide legal identity for the children (United Nations statistics, 2020) which is measured by the number of under 5 children whose birth has been registered in the civil register of their country. If sub-Saharan African countries and Nigeria have to achieve this goal like other nations of the world by 2030, birth registration data can be considered by the government as a policy instrument to gather the required information/data for planning for the future. With significance to the concept of birth registration, the report cited birth registration as the first step that is essential for the government to be successful in making its policies, implementation of such policies and monitoring same at all levels of its development (Pelowsky et al., 2015).

With further determination to continue data gathering of its population, through collection of vital information like birth and death registration, another legislation was enacted in Nigeria to strengthen the existing one. Therefore, in 1917, a comprehensive legislation to ensure these vital information; birth, death registration, marriages and divorce were registered was brought forth in Nigeria to begin collection of vital information of its citizens. By 1948, a birth, death and burial ordinance was created to consolidate the 1917 legislation, but it was applicable to the townships (Makinde et al., 2016). This created a wider gap of achieving the desired result because the turnout in the rural area continued to decline. Pelowsky et al. (2015) highlighted this in their study when they argued that low registration of birth was a challenge in the rural and more traditional setting, which led to a wide gap in documentation and services.

By 1979, Nigeria as a nation reiterated that the registration of birth and death would continue to be mandatory for its citizen, this was highlighted in the works of Tobin et al. (2013) and this decision orchestrated the plan to set up a body that will be responsible for this vital information and data gathering, this birth the creation of the National Population Commission. The National Population Commission (NPopC) of Nigeria, which is the body charged with the responsibility to ensure all birth and death are registered appropriately within a set time frame was conceived by decree No 23 in 1989 by the military government of Nigeria at the time. The creation was further strengthened through the Birth, Death, E.T.C (compulsory registration) Act of 1992, NO 69. The NPopC was created to take the responsibility of collecting, analyzing, and circulating

the demographic data in the country (Makinde et al., 2016). This was the first national conscious effort that was made by the Nigerian government to have a universal system for registering birth and death, according to UNICEF (2007), although birth and death had been occurring in the country from time immemorial in the villages. In addition to this role, the NPopC is assigned the task of population census to centralize information pertaining to vital events and population statistics, Makinde et al. (2016) acknowledged this statement in their study.

To give further strength to the importance of documenting this vital information (birth and death registration), a Child Right Act (CRA) was enacted as part of a national policy in 2003 in Nigeria as a support of both the UNCRC (1989) and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of Child. The United Nations Child Right Convention was ratified in 1989 and implemented in 1990 (UNCRC, 1989). The African Charter of July 1990 also emphasized registering the birth of a child immediately after they are born, this is stated in Article 6 of the charter which also included the right of the child to a nationality. The Child Right Act<sup>12</sup> 2003 of Nigeria stated in its part 2, section 5, sub-section 2 that “the birth of every child shall be registered in accordance with the provisions of the Birth, Death etc. (Compulsory Registration) Act 1992” (Child Right Act, 2003). The UNCRC initiated treaties of which article 7 of the convention stated the right of every child to be registered at birth and given a nationality (United Nations, n.d -a; UNCRC,1989). The Child Right Act mandated that all new births must have compulsory registration within 60 days (Isara and Atimati, 2015). Although this paper, is focused on birth registration, we need to refer to death registration to have an insight into its documentation and how its records are used for policy formulation and development in the Public Health monitoring, disease control and policy planning. Lending more credence through their research to birth registration, Isara and Atimati (2015) argued that registration of birth serves as a legal and a statistical purpose in relation to policy planning and national development. Ascribing the legal aspect to acknowledging the existence of the child legally through birth registration while the statistical aspect is linked to the nation ability to keep its population statistics, the trends and differentials observed within any time frame (UNICEF, 2005). Existing birth registration can give the government the authentic data (not an estimated figure) to plan accurately and develop policies relevant to take care of social services like housing, education, health, employment and even sanitation (UNICEF, 2005). Birth registration which legally identifies the existence of a person is said to serve as a proof which the state can use for recognition of the lives of the people they are serving, defending and developing in terms of governance and provision of social amenities (WHO and World Bank, 2014). The absence of an important legal identification document has been highlighted in the work of Harbitz and Boekle-Giuffrida (2009)

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<sup>12</sup> A copy of this can be found in the Appendix E.

as a connection to poverty and being vulnerable, in addition to lack of transparent and inefficient processes in Public Administration, hence the need for birth registration. The above statement about the inefficient process can also serve as a research justification to investigate the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria.

Selim (2019) contributing to the importance of birth registration through organizations like UNICEF, also corroborated the legal aspect of birth registration as giving an identity to the child as well as a right of human existence. This identity they mentioned confers the right to life to such individuals. This makes it possible for children registered at birth to be visible to the government and the government can have adequate data on the number of children who needs health care facilities like immunization, those who need to be enrolled in school in a particular year as well as corresponding number of teachers and other infrastructure to make available in schools and hospitals. The scholar also mentioned that unregistered children will miss out on important health care services which the government uses the birth registration data collected to plan for. The study highlighted examples of immunization vaccines for children under five years of age who are the most vulnerable to diseases and death at this age.

Some other scholars like Todres (2003) further argued that creating a birth registration process that can be maintained or improving upon existing processes over time will also include ensuring that the national laws and regulations regarding birth registration are reviewed and the process simplified; this is in addition to eliminating legislative barriers. He mentioned an example of process improvement in Rajshashi, Bangladesh where the birth registration process was decentralized. This helped to reach the poorer communities thereby increasing the birth registration rate.

#### **4.2 Birth Registration Process changes in Nigeria**

The demographic information and data are usually used for policy planning and development and to make vital economic decisions (NBS, 2018). The demographic information assists the country to accelerate economic growth as well as improvement in health, education, economic policy and good governance (NBS, 2018). The population pyramid of Nigeria using the demographic information available shows that the majority of the population lies between the ages 0-14 years of age, argued the NBS. Having majority of its population in this age bracket reflect that there is a high percentage of the dependent age (NBS, 2018) and this makes it vital to capture birth registration information to be able to make adequate provision to provide the required social welfare services especially in area of education and health which may assist nations to improve their economic development. Birth registration, which is classified as part of the demographics of a nation, will benefit from process improvement or even completeness

in order to have detailed information about its population for adequate national planning (Williams, 2014). The country will eventually reach the universal level if this process change is done in a more sustainable and continuous way. The study argued that Nigeria's birth registration coverage stood at 28.2% while Cameroon had 78.6%, Republic of Benin 61.7% and Togo 81.2% (UNICEF, 2002 cited in Williams, 2014). Looking at the percentages mentioned above, it is evident that Nigeria needs to work towards its birth registration completeness to be on the same level with other sub-Saharan African countries. This they mentioned called for improvement in the birth registration process and streamlining the process in order to encourage increased registration of birth.

The study also opined that it is important to investigate reasons why people are not registering the birth of their children. Understanding these reasons will enable changes made to the birth registration process to have desired effect at the local level. Some of the reasons mentioned in the study for non-registration of birth were highlighted as ignorance, geographical remoteness, home birth, reluctance to register events like birth registration, poverty, and ethnicity.

The BRA as the legislative document which contains the birth registration processes in Nigeria had gone through some changes which were not documented in the legislative procedure of the BRA. This subchapter will explain this.

The NPopC has a mandate to issue birth certificates to citizens born after 1992 upon the registration of such birth by authorized personnel (see table 3-4), although the organization was set up in 1988, mandate to register was given in 1992 (Makinde et al., (2016); Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee board of Canada [IRB], 2008). According to an investigation by the IRB on Nigerias' birth registration process, every adult born before 1992 has to legally obtain a sworn affidavit from the court which can be presented to the NPopC for issuance of an attestation of age equivalent to a birth certificate. A sample copy of an attestation can be found in Appendix C.

Other changes geared towards improving the birth registration process by the government is the inclusion of the birth registration program in national policy plans and commitment. For example, the government initiated and included birth registration programs in national policy like the Nigeria vision 20:2020 (NV 20:2020) and the National Priority Agenda (2013 - 2020) with the aim of achieving a universal birth registration as the end goal (UNICEF Nigeria, 2019). According to UNICEF Nigeria (2019, p.33), the National Priority Agenda has on its commitment number 6 "provision of a legal identity to all children". These are changes to the process of birth registration to increase government support, increase adoption by the citizens and

behavioural change towards the importance of birth registration. Appendix F is a copy of comprehensive programs put in place with timelines, at regional and national level, to explain some changes to the birth registration process between 2014 -2019.

The table 4-1 display some changes introduced into the policy program to eliminate barriers, increase birth registration rate and implementation.

Table 4-1: Changes Introduced to Policy Programs to Eliminate Barriers to Birth Registration at National and Regional Level

Workshop on CRVS Strategic Plan 2018-2022	Oct 2014	N/A	Workshop conducted in Calabar by the NPopC involving key stakeholders (including UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) etc.). Overall aim was to contribute to the development of the 2018-2022 CRVS Strategic Plan.
Media Alliance Workshop	Oct 2014	Oct 2018	Workshop organized by UNICEF in collaboration with the NPopC and hosted in Kaduna. Participants included representatives from media organizations various states around Nigeria.
Third Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration	9 February 2015	13 February 2015	Organized by various stakeholders, including the African Union and the UNECA, the conference took place in Yamoussoukro, in Côte d'Ivoire. Participating countries agreed to take



			steps to improve their civil registration systems. through capacity building, addressing rights issues, appropriate financing, the application of technology, service delivery, the implementation of evidence-based policies, leveraging the global media, strengthening coordination capabilities and advocacy.
Communication and media campaign for Kaduna	2015	N/A	IEC/BCC campaign to raise awareness of the significance and process of birth registration.
Communication and media campaign for Kebbi	2016	N/A	IEC/BCC campaign to raise awareness of the significance and process of birth registration.
Communication and media campaign for Adamawa	2016	N/A	IEC/BCC campaign to raise awareness of the significance and process of birth registration.
Communication and media campaign for Bauchi	2017	N/A	IEC/BCC campaign to raise awareness of the significance and process of birth registration.
UNICEF Country Program	2018	2022	Upcoming program cycle.

**Source: Researcher's compilation, 2022.**

### **4.3 Changes in Procedure of birth registration between 2014 - 2019**

To ensure a sustainable and continuous process of vital information registration; birth, death, marriage, divorce, and adoption; Nigeria centralized its civil registration process through the creation of the National population commission (NPopC). The NPopC was created with the establishment of decree No 23 in 1989 by the military government in Nigeria at the time. The creation was further strengthened through the Birth, Death, E.T.C (compulsory registration) Act of 1992, NO 69. Of all the mentioned vital information in the Act, the focus of this research will be solely on birth registration. The National population commission's presence is registered in the two regions of Southern and Northern Nigeria through office creation in respective local government areas, this is to make registration of birth and death easier for the citizens (Maduekwe et al., 2016).

Mahapatra et al. cited in Makinde et al. (2016) acknowledged that there need to be changes to existing birth registration process(es) in Africa in order to improve birth registration as there are just about less than 10% of African population that comes from a country with complete birth registration procedure while recording 50% success rate of compliance. In a bid to make the process better and encouraging to citizens, the NPopC allowed birth to be registered within the first 60 days of the birth of the child (UNICEF, 2007; Makinde et al., 2016) and registration was done free of charge. It was reported that an estimated number of only about 65% of children below 5 years of age get registered globally, this leaves about 1 child in every 3 children unregistered (UNICEF, 2019). Makinde et al. (2016) also reiterated that creating a strategic plan and designing a process to pass the importance and benefit of birth registration to the citizen is important; this must be communicated to all. Hence the importance of also investigating changes that had occurred in the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria.

Between 2012 and 2016, for the NPopC to improve on its process of gathering this vital information, the agency began partnering with major global organizations like UNICEF, World Health Organization, and some local child right organizations to ensure a change in data collection process which occurs at the various representative offices, including the local government, reported a study by Makinde et al. (2016). The partnership with the local government will involve the local government offices being used as representative offices of the National Population Commission for birth registrations occurring in such localities for ease of access. This change was invisible in previous legislative procedure according to the study. The study further asserted that a rapid short message service (SMS) platform was also created to enable mothers to send vital information to a designated platform and for assisting officers in remote areas to use this SMS platform for reporting. The use of this service is to facilitate the registration of birth as well (UNICEF, 2012 cited in Makinde et al., 2016). Although the

country did not meet its target of ensuring a 100 percent registration of children by 2015 (UNICEF, 2019), all the above-mentioned changes strengthened the process and increased the number of births registered for children nationwide in Nigeria and specifically in different local government areas in the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria. Makinde et al. (2016) argues that improving the birth and death registration process requires checking for completeness<sup>13</sup> of the registration at different intervals to benefit from changes made to the procedure.

Williams (2014) asserted in an empirical study that there is predominantly low completeness of the vital information (Birth and Death) amongst the developing nations which makes the vital information inaccurate, or the data completely missing. If children are not registered promptly, the required data will either be missing and non-existence or the available one will not be adequate for planning. The study further reiterated that to achieve completeness, which Makinde et al. (2016) also advocated as a requirement for checking the success and effectiveness of changes made to the procedure of birth registration; process improvement of birth registration and evaluation of existing data after the process had been adjusted, need to be carried out. This is to ensure there is a standard for measuring the changes applied.

As scholars like Makinde et al. (2016) and Williams (2014) advocated for completeness of the birth registration to demonstrate effectiveness of the changes made, some scholars' views differ on this. Scholars like Pelowsky et al. (2015) differ on the assertion of checking for completeness in the process. Pelowsky et al. argued that universal registration is required to measure changes made to the procedure rather than completeness. The universal registration will require access to registration services and improvement awareness among parents. With these scholars' proposal, they argued that registration of birth was still low in developing countries when birth registration is viewed from this perspective.

While the changes that have occurred to the birth registration procedure had been highlighted above, it is important to also highlight here that there has been no noticeable change or review done between 2014 to 2019 on the BRA of 1992 document which encompass the national procedure of birth registration in Nigeria. All documents analyzed in this study are those available in the public domain through the website of the NPopC. However, policy documents to enhance citizen's wellbeing, generate data and monitor the population trend were developed to supplement the changes required for the BRA, 1992 to be an improved document. In this

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<sup>13</sup> Completeness is necessary to evaluate the improvement that has been made thus far on birth registration and to focus on improving the weak area (Makinde et al., 2016). The goal of this is to finally reach universal registration.

section, I shall analyze the birth registration procedure and other policy documents available to improve the procedure or population figure.

#### **A) Birth, Death, (Compulsory Registration) Act 1992, No 62.**

The Birth, Death, (Compulsory Registration) Act 1992, No 62. (BRA) is the legislative framework that detailed the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria. The document was conceived in 1992 and had been adopted for national use in the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria. The BRA was enacted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 1992 in Nigeria by the federal government of Nigeria. This document serves as the legislative document to guide citizens in the registration of vital events, which provides the government with data for policy planning, implementation, budget allocation and population monitoring. The NPopC is the government agency legally authorized to oversee the implementation of the content of the BRA document.

The BRA is structured into different sections and each section gives details of the procedure to follow in registering vital events. This study will limit its analysis to the birth registration section only. The procedure of birth registration and all related activity is contained in part II, sections 7 to 16 of the BRA. An overview of the sections is attached in Appendix F.

The themes of this study did not get any mention in the BRA; that is **Education, Wealth, and Distance**. A search of these themes returned (0). This can be ascribed to the BRA document being a policy tool to provide a guideline for the citizens towards the collection of vital events information. The identified themes were discovered during the study as part of the barriers that are affecting the citizens and posing as a challenge to the statutory use of this policy tool by the citizens, therefore, this can be adjudged to be the reason for the absence of these themes. Investigating the core concepts of the study in the BRA however revealed some interesting discoveries. The broad concept of *birth registration* was found in the BRA only 3 times, the term "*registration of birth(s)*" was discovered instead, and this connotes the same interpretation as the concept *birth registration*, and this featured (41) times in the document. Therefore, it is considered that the BRA did mention the concept "*birth registration*". The word *birth(s)* in itself was mentioned in the document (340) times. The search of other core concepts returned the following result: *registration of death(s)* (12), *death* (272), the core concept of the study "*death registration*" was also found with minimal mention (4). The word "*death*" and "*registration of death(s)*" were mentioned several times as would the concept death registration. The two concepts were used to communicate the same message in the BRA document. *Procedure* search in the BRA document returned (5), *Birth register* (1), *Birth certificate* (5), this was mentioned as certificate of birth which implies the same as birth certificate. *Vital event* (0), *Vital record* (0), *Civil registration* (0), *Vital statistics* (1), *Vital registration system* (0). Concepts that

were discovered in the BRA documents which can also give meaning to the broad concept of birth registration are Vital (4), Vital Registration (2) and Civil (1). A similarity in the concept of the study; *vital registration system* and the concept mentioned in the BRA which is vital registration can be proposed due to the two core concepts connoting similar interpretation. All the core concepts of this study that were mentioned in the BRA document were to explain the importance of the policy tool and how the stakeholders relate with the rules guiding the application of these concepts. It is agreed that not all the concepts of the study are present in the BRA document, deduction can be made that there are some similarities in the applications of some identified concepts which have been duly explained.

The BRA specified that registrars are to be assigned to the different local government or catchment areas within the federation. The registrars are the officials designated by the BRA to register all vital events including birth registration. According to the available literature and studies consulted during this study, for example, Makinde et al., (2016) argued that presence of NPopC offices in the local government will facilitate more registration as this will bridge the barrier of distance to registration centres. In comparison to what is documented in the BRA and what is implemented, not all local government areas have the presence of the NPopC which should facilitate registration of birth, and this can be argued as a reason for the collaboration between NPopC and local government offices to have the local government carry out the registration of birth as a collaborative effort

The other policy documents that are selected for the purpose of this study are the Nigeria demographic and health survey (NDHS), the multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS), the National policy on population for sustainable development (NPP) and implementation of the SDG; A National Voluntary Review. The NDHS and MICS were introduced by the UNICEF in conjunction with NPopC and NBS to ensure continuous and updated data gathering of citizen information (NPoC & ICF, 2019; NBS & UNICEF, 2017), monitor program improvements of child development, survival, and protection especially children under five years of age (Federal office of statistics [FOS] & UNICEF, 2000 cited in NPopC & ICF, 2019). These documents are in the context of measuring the social welfare of the children and economic development of the nation. These policy documents were adapted based on the consideration that the birth registration is low (Makinde et al., 2016) and not generating the required data envisioned for policy planning and for international comparison and standard. According to UNICEF Data (2020), household surveys such as the NDHS and MICS can be considered an important data source used to monitor the volume and amount of birth registration in a certain country. Therefore, the selected policy documents for consideration are considered to have the focus of reducing the low birth registration problem due to its implementation which made some data

available on citizens; this might assist the government and policymakers to continuously have data for social and economic development planning.

There are series of the NDHS and MICS surveys that have been carried out by the NPopC, the first of which was in 1999 (NPopC, 2014). Six surveys in the NDHS series have been carried out so far: 1990, 1999, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018. This study will however analyze content from the NDHS and MICS documents that were carried out within the time frame of this study, 2014 - 2019. Therefore, NDHS that fall within this purview of this study is the 2018 survey while the MICS5 2016 – 2017, which is the fifth in the series also falls within the time range of this study. Consideration is also given to the mention of the theme of birth registration or measures to the barriers of birth registration in these documents in order to consider them for selection. This consideration will assist the study to obtain an answer to the study's main question which is "*What are the measures that the Nigerian Government can initiate to remove the barriers to the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5 years)*"?

**B) The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2018):** The survey is considered one of the policy tools for the implementation and coordination of population activities in Nigeria used by the NPopC (NPopC & ICF, 2019). The first in the series of the NDHS was carried out in 1990 while the selected document is the sixth in the series. The NDHS serves as another document used for generating relevant social and economic data about the citizens. This document is issued by the government agency that is most relevant in the administration and management of citizen's vital information like birth registration data, which is the National Population Commission of Nigeria. The theme that indicates measures against the barriers of birth registration will be identified in this document. **Education of Parents, Wealth of parents, distance to location;** are some of the themes that are related to measures that can be used to find answers to the main question and they have been selected to be identified in the NDHS survey, 2018.

These themes were searched in this policy document and how often they were cited or featured in the documents. The core concepts of birth registration which were identified and defined in the methodology chapter are also searched in this policy document. The core concepts which are *birth registration, death registration, procedure, birth register, birth certificate, vital event, vital record, civil registration, vital statistics, vital registration systems and statelessness* will be checked for its existence or mention in this document. If these core concepts are cited or if they exist in the documents, it signifies that the policy documents identify with the measures that the government wants to initiate to eliminate the birth registration barrier. However, if the relevant themes

selected to be checked for this study are also found to exist in the NDHS policy document, it is also an indication that the document covers the measures that the government wants to initiate to eliminate the barriers of birth registration.

In the NDHS 2018 document, the theme *education (773) and wealth (322) of parents* were prevalent. The theme *distance* was not as prevalent or mentioned as the theme of education and wealth. These two themes were used in the survey to check the level of education of those who registered their children and level of wealth of these parents. These two themes can be identified as some of the measures to barriers of birth registration, the selected barriers that the theme is being checked against are *poverty, economic barriers and level of education of parents*. The document argued that parents with a high level of education tend to register the birth of their children more than those with little or no education. It argued further those wealthier parents or those with higher household income tend to register their children accordingly. This wealth status encourages the parents to register their children irrespective of the timing of registration due to the financial means to pay the penalty for late registration. The documents argued that 75% of children from the highest wealth quintile are more likely to get their birth registered while only 16% of children from the lowest wealth quintile are likely to be registered.

The concept of *birth registration* is highly mentioned in this policy document, it was mentioned about 17 times while the word *birth* was mentioned more than 400 times. The document analyzed the number of children who are under 5 years old that had been registered by their parents with a civil authority. 43% of children surveyed in the Northern and Southern region were said to have been registered during the period of the survey. The document further stated that of the 43% of children that had been registered, one in every five of those children possess a birth certificate. The other core concepts that were mentioned in the document are *birth register (4)*, *birth certificate (7)*, *procedure (26)*, *civil authorities* which is the legally recognized authority responsible for registration of birth, this was mentioned in the document about (8) times rather than the concept *civil registration*, which is one of the core concepts defined and used in this study. We can however find a relation in these two concepts; civil registration implies the registration of the vital events, which is the actual activity being carried out while civil authorities imply the body responsible for registration of the vital event. Therefore, a similarity in these two concepts. Other core concepts of the study like death registration, vital statistics, vital event, vital record, vital registration system, statelessness did not get any mention or discussion in the policy document. While accepting that not all concepts identified in the study will be mentioned in the selected

policy documents, we can however find terms or concepts that are similarly related to explain the phenomenon being investigated.

**C) Multiple Indicator cluster survey 2016- 2017 (MICS5):** This is another policy tool which helps generate data for National policies (NBC, 2018). Comparable to the NDHS, there are series of MICS that have been carried out and the first was carried out in 1995. At that time, the NBS was known as the Federal office of Statistics of Nigeria (FOS). The other series were conducted in 1999, 2007, 2011 and 2016 – 2017 (NBC & UNICEF, 2018). This survey is described to complement the data generated from the NDHS by providing statistics to match those generated from the NDHS (NBS & UNICEF, 2018). Data from the MICS and NDHS is reported to be incorporated into available statistics on birth registration to make policy decisions for children regarding health, for example in the area of vaccination, social welfare and infrastructure allocation.

The MICS5 policy document is being composed by the National Bureau of statistics (NBS), a government agency in Nigeria responsible for generation of important statistics for economic planning and policy development, in conjunction with UNICEF. This policy document focused on monitoring SDG target indicators, of which birth registration is one of the targets, hence the selection of the document. Regarded as another policy tool to examine the progress of national goals that have been set by the government and global commitment relating to children's welfare. In this study, the document is analyzed to check the SDG goal target 16.9 on birth registration as this is also inclusive as part of the sub question of this study, sub question three to be specific. In the MICS 2016 - 2017, the theme *Education (975)* and *Wealth (640)* were also mentioned prominently like the themes stated in the NDHS policy document. These themes were used in relation to check the level of education of the respondents against the social welfare criteria that is being surveyed. For example, the document checked the level of education attained by parents of children who are under 5 years of age to determine their willingness to vaccinate their children. Vaccination is one of the social benefits of registering the birth of children, as such this can be categorized as a measure being initiated by the government against barriers to birth registration.

The theme of wealth was also stated in this document. The level of household wealth vis a vis how such wealth is applied to birth registration (being able to afford late registration fee), access to attending school for the children and getting the children the required vaccinations; these are the context within which these themes are being stated in the document. There was no mention of the theme *Distance* in this document, therefore there is no related measure to this barrier in the document. The core concepts



of *birth registration, death registration, procedure, birth register, birth certificate, vital event, vital record, civil registration, vital statistics, vital registration systems and statelessness* will also be checked in this policy document. The concept of *birth registration* was mentioned twelve times, the word *birth* was mentioned 576 times in comparison to 400 times that it was mentioned in the NDHS policy document. The core concepts of the study that got a mention in this policy document are *birth certificate* (18), and *procedure* (4) times. The other core concepts did not get a mention in this document. The policy document focuses on tracking some of the SDG targets, of which birth registration is one. The document assessed child protection through SDG 16.9.1 which emphasized on birth registration and whether registered children were issued a birth certificate. An important theme which was not selected to be searched as part of the barriers identified but discovered in this policy document was *the knowledge of birth registration procedure*. Knowledge of the procedure of birth registration is one of the barriers identified in Nigeria at the national and regional level (Northern and Southern part of Nigeria). This document investigated whether parents understood the procedure to follow in order to register their children. Understanding the procedure will increase knowledge and birth registration as a whole.

#### **4.3.1a Differences in procedure of birth registration in Southern Nigeria between 2014 - 2019**

The Southern<sup>14</sup> and the Northern part of Nigeria is mainly differentiated through their cultural differences in relation to language spoken, way of dressing and religious affiliation. However, the procedure of registering a birth is a legislative requirement contained in the Birth, Death, ETC (COMPULSORY REGISTRATION) Act of 1992 (Birth Registration Act, 1992) and which is a provision of the law. Therefore, it is argued that across the Northern and Southern region of the country, this procedure should be in alignment with the regional legislation and be duly followed.

The differences in the procedure being followed is not formally documented but could be displayed in the cultural practices of the citizens from the Northern and Southern region of Nigeria. Cultural practices affecting the differences in procedure followed in registering birth in the Southern region is related to the time taken to name a child. This delay is related to family consultation and the research to be carried out on the kind of names given to children and consultations with the family's ancestors. All the above highlights lead to delay in a child's birth

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<sup>14</sup> The Southern part of Nigeria also called the Southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria is made up of South South (SS), Southeast (SE) and Southwest (SW). SS is made up of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers State, Delta, Edo, Rivers State. SE comprises Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo State while SW comprises Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti and Osun States.

registration and sometimes no registration occurs, thereby making citizens deviate from the laid down procedure of birth registration.

#### **4.3.1b Differences in procedure of birth registration in Northern Nigeria between 2014 - 2019**

In the Northern region, registration of birth is sometimes done at the time a child is willing to go to school, thereby deviating from the procedure that stipulates children must be registered within 60 days of birth (Birth Registration Act, 1992).

Parents in the Northern region who follow the Islamic faith christen of their children according to their custom and religion thus registering the birth of the child is therefore not perceived as very important to some parents. This is a deviation from the procedure of birth registration set out at the national level. Children are christened Islamically seven days after birth and some parents do not bother about birth registration until such a time that the child needs to be enrolled in elementary school. This practice causes a deviation from the laid down procedure of birth registration as documented in the BRA.

#### **4.3.2 Similarities in the procedure of birth registration in Southern and Northern Nigeria**

The BRA (1992) in Section 2 sub section 7 did state that every child in Nigeria will be registered after birth and within 60 days as a procedural guideline for birth registration. The Act did not specify different registration procedures for the Southern and Northern region of the country. In 2003, the Federal Government of Nigeria further enacted the Child' right act which mandatorily requested the registration of every child within 60 days of birth (Child Right Act, 2003). This legislative policy carried further the requirements contained in the BRA (1992) without differentiating the procedure of birth registration in the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria. As such, similarity of procedure is legally present and observed similarly in the two regions.

According to part II, section 7 of the BRA (1992), the national birth registration procedure to be adopted by the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria is described below.

Table 4-2: Selected Procedure of Birth Registration from Birth, Death (Compulsory Registration) Act 1992, No 69

<b>BRA Sections</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Explanation from BRA</b>
Part II 2, section 7	Every birth in Nigeria shall be	Registrar of birth. Parent	Newborn babies found without a mother, will be

	registered, both live and still born.		registered in the area where they were found.
Part II, section 8	Registration of birth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents (Mother &amp; father)</li> <li>• Head of household</li> <li>• Occupier of house where child was born</li> <li>• Medical officer of hospital or designate.</li> </ul>	Three sets of people shall be responsible for registering any birth that occurs in their household or as it concerns them.
Part II, section 9, sub-section a, b, c, d.	Information about a Birth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons who have attended a birth.</li> <li>• Religious leaders or those officiating religious services.</li> <li>• Village head or local functionary.</li> <li>• Any person notified of a birth.</li> </ul>	These set of people shall be responsible for reporting the birth of a child.
Part II, section 10.  Part II, section 10, sub-section a and b.	Time of Registration.	Persons Required to give information on birth.	<p>All birth information shall be given within 60 days of birth.</p> <p>Birth shall also be registered within 12 months with a fee payment and authorization of the deputy registrar.</p>

Part II, section 11, sub-section a and b.	Registration of Name after Birth Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Guardian</li> <li>• Registrar</li> <li>• Deputy Registrar</li> </ul>	Where a birth had been registered previously without a name, it is allowed to register the name within 12 months on payment of a fee.
Part II, section 12, sub-section and b.	Registration of a birth out of wedlock.	Mother Acknowledging Father (as declared by the mother)	No father shall be required to give information about the birth of a child except the person declared by the mother as the father of the child.
Part II, section 13, sub-section 1 and 2	Child Baptism	Religious Leaders	No child will be baptized except on receipt of a birth certificate. In case of baptism without a birth certificate, the religious leader must notify the registrar of the birth within 48 hours.
Part II, section 14	Child Naming	Religious Leader	In the case of an Islamic naming ceremony, the religious leader will forward the names of the child to the registrar after the child has been named. No time frame was given for this.
Part II, section 15	Birth Certificate	Registrar of Birth	A birth certificate shall be issued to the informant or parents upon registration of a birth. No fee shall be charged for this service. No certificate shall be issued for still born.

Part II, section 16	Summon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registrar of Birth</li> <li>• Parent</li> <li>• Legal representatives.</li> </ul>	The registrar may send a written notice to summon parents or legally authorized persons when a birth has not been registered. Upon receipt of this summon, registration is expected to be carried out within 2 days.
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**Source: Birth Registration Procedure from Birth, Death (Compulsory Registration) Act 1992**

With the procedure detailed in table 4-2 above, it can be deduced that the procedure for registering of birth in the Southern and Northern Region of Nigeria is a uniform procedure according to the legislative framework. There is no indication in the procedure that differentiate this activity in the two regions.

#### **4.4 Barriers to Birth Registration in Nigeria**

Several reasons have been assigned to the low rate of birth registration in Nigeria according to the academic literature that has been consulted in this study. Some of these reasons have been itemized here to include **financial barriers** to the poor who cannot afford the cost of birth registration (Makinde et al., 2016). According to Makinde et al. parents are expected to pay a certain amount to the government if they do not register their children within 60 days. At the expiration of the 60 days grace period, parents no longer feel the need to carry out the exercise as a result of the cost involved.

**Education:** Non-educated parents from the Northern part of Nigeria especially also constituted a barrier to birth registration (Makinde et al., 2016). These scholars argued that when parents do not have the required training through education to understand the importance of birth registration, it culminates into issues like lack of awareness of the importance of birth registration (especially among the uneducated parent), lack of knowledge of current national legislation making this exercise compulsory, lack of understanding of the value of birth registration and the birth certificate that gives identity to the child.

Further barriers highlighted are **limited registration centers** especially in rural areas, limited financial resources to fund latest infrastructure by the government, and inadequate effective registration (UNICEF, 2007; UNICEF Nigeria, 2019). Makinde et al., argued further that there was an unusual occurrence of birth registration being low in the urban areas more than the rural areas despite the educational level of the parents in the urban areas. Although the

awareness on birth registration is created more in the urban area than in the rural area (Makinde et al., 2016), the urban area still lacks the required volume of birth registration expected. It was highlighted that there was an increase of birth registration from 14.9% in 2011 to 69.6% in 2016 in the rural areas while the urban areas recorded 42.7% in 2011 to a drop of 37% in 2016 (UNICEF, 2019) however, despite this increase in the rural area, the barriers were still evident and did not increase the registration level to completeness.

With reference to previous studies on birth registrations in Nigeria such as Makinde et al. (2016), Salawu, (2009), some studies have pointed out further barriers to this important activity.

**(a) Poverty:** This has been highlighted as one of the barriers to people registering the birth of their children. The poverty here is in relation to not being able to afford the cost of transporting themselves to the location where they need to register their children or the cost of paying the required fee for late registration (UNICEF, 2019).

**(b) Culture and belief:** This barrier has been identified in Nigeria as part of the impediments to registering birth. This could be ascribed to the fact that the country is multicultural in nature and people from some part of the country have a belief system that registering their children will expose them to certain danger (Makinde et al., 2016). Also, the study mentioned that the Muslim faithful give names to their children after seven days. This contributes to the birth registration of those children being delayed or totally forgotten once they have been given a birth name.

**(c) Economic barrier:** This is related to the financial inconvenience to the citizens but economic gains that the government derive from late registration of new-born. In Nigeria, failure to register your child after 60 days of being brought to life will attract a charge. The NPopC which is the body responsible for registration of birth have a penalty for late registration even though the rule is not always applied, the existence of the rule deters parents from registering their children (Makinde et al., 2016).

**(d) Lack of political priority:** It has been mentioned that countries do not give priority in their political agenda to the importance of birth registration as a source of information and data gathering for policy planning. Countries that do not support birth registration as a vital instrument for policy planning through their political will are sure to face challenges of infrastructural development beneficial to its citizens. According to Salawu (2009), no policy design or plan of action can be good enough if it is not supported by a political will to implement such plans. The study gave an example of two African countries; South Africa and Zimbabwe where the political support for the recommended changes by the technical review committees of their existing system culminated in the improvement of their vital registration system. There

is no evidence that the issue of birth registration is given political priority in Nigeria, the study argued further.

**(e) Distance:** Birth registration offices are more accessible for those living in the urban area than to those in the remote area and villages (Salawu, 2009). The presence of the birth registration offices in most Local government headquarters in Nigeria, make visiting these locations a long journey for those living in the interior or remote part of the states. Parents who live in such remote areas find it difficult or costly due to the distance that has to be travelled and therefore resort to not registering their children at the appropriate time or not registering at all (UNICEF, 2019).

**(f) Procedure of Birth Registration:** Some parents had indicated not knowing the procedure to follow to register their children. In an evaluation report of birth registration between 2012-2016, the study highlighted that 16% of parents surveyed mention this barrier as a reason for not registering their children (UNICEF Nigeria, 2019).

**(g) Disconnect between government Institutions:** In the study of Makinde et al., (2016), it was argued that the NPopC and the ministry of health in Nigeria do not collaborate as government agencies in order to strengthen birth registration. The NPopC that is responsible for birth registration do not have a working relationship with the ministry of health who oversees the facilities where the actual birth occurs. Neither is there a policy document that details how these two institutions should interact. This is therefore considered as a barrier to birth registration in the country by this study. The study suggests that collaboration between the two government institutions can be derived from the legislative policy which can be proposed by the national government. The collaboration suggested in the study proposed that the facilities where parents register before their children are born for antenatal care, could work with staff of the NPopC where they can educate the parents. The staff will educate the parents on the importance of registering their children during the antenatal visit and guide them on the procedure.

**(h) Technological Infrastructure:** Limited availability of required technology to facilitate birth registration activity has been cited as a barrier in developing countries like Nigeria. According to a study by the Inter-American Development bank [IDB] and UNICEF (2015), children born outside of a health facility or home are liable to be unregistered due to lack of technology. The study advocates that making available an online registration with required birth reference will allow children born outside legally recognized facilities to be adequately registered and ensure such children gain an identity.

UNICEF Nigeria (2019) also reiterated that limited technology infrastructure like mobile registration centres and SMS based registration could reduce technological barrier for those

in troubled areas and internally displaced like the Northeastern<sup>15</sup> part of Nigeria. The study argued that provision of technology will reduce low registration in troubled areas.

#### **4.4.1 Barriers to Birth Registration in Southern Nigeria.**

Available study of birth registration in the Southern part of Nigeria did highlight some barriers specific to the region. In general, the barriers in both the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria are not so much as highlighted in the studies that have been done in the two regions. Below are some barriers specific to the Southern part of Nigeria which have been collated centered around the barriers identified at the National level.

- (i) **Economic Barrier:** Economic pressure is cited as a barrier to registering birth in the Southern part of Nigeria. This has been related to the cost of registering the child when the grace period of 60 days given for free registration has elapsed (Cody, 2009). Most parents avoid paying the late registration fee by boycotting the birth registration of their children despite being educated enough to understand the consequences of non-registration.
- (ii) **Culture and Belief System:** As Nigeria is regarded as multi-ethnic and multi religion, the Southern region of the country is populated by citizens practicing the Islamic religion but not as predominant as the Northern region of the country. Makinde et al., (2016) argued in their study that Muslims conduct the christening and assign a name to their children after 7 days of birthing the child. This assertion also applies to Muslims in the Southern region of Nigeria. Parents find no need to register their children and obtain the nationally recognized birth certificate because a makeshift certificate is also issued by the religious leaders performing the baby's christening in the Islamic way. Some parents have the notion that this certificate suffices but it is not legally recognized according to the study of Makinde et al. (2016)
- (iii) **Distance:** The geographical set up of the birth registration offices create a barrier to those living in the rural Southern region of Nigeria at the regional level because of the travel times to the birth registration centres which were in the urban areas. This barrier is prevalent at the regional level as it is stated as a barrier at the national level. According to Salawu (2009, p. 203) "As of today, the spatial coverage is low and it's only much effective in urban areas, states and local government

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<sup>15</sup> The North eastern part of Nigeria is considered part of the Northern part of Nigeria. States in the North east comprise of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states.



headquarters". The study further explained that the impact of birth registration offices was denied due to non accessibility to the location offices.

- (iv) **Cost – Benefit analysis:** Pelowsky, (2015) argued that despite the high education and awareness level in the Southern region which should increased birth registration, the reverse is the case. The study argued that parents weigh the cost benefit analysis of birth registration and make a deliberate decision not to register due to no benefit they perceive that they will derive from registering the birth of their children at the appropriate time. They only assume derived benefits when their children go to school.

#### 4.4.2 Barriers to Birth Registration in Northern Nigeria

- (i) **Culture and Belief System:** Nigeria being a multi-cultural and multi religion country, Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslims. Makinde et al., in their study conducted in 2016 reported that only 30.4% of Muslims in the Northern part of Nigeria had registered their children highlighting the religious beliefs among the Northern inhabitant as a reason for low registration. The study highlighted that it is customary in the Northern part of Nigeria for Muslims to give names to their children after 7 days of birthing the child. Once this is achieved, the official birth registration is seen as another burden upon them as they see no need for it. This is therefore considered a barrier to birth registration in this part of Nigeria.
- (ii) **Gender Bias:** Discrimination between male and female was also cited as a barrier in Makinde et al., (2016). In the study, the result of the empirical study conducted revealed that only 40.6% females were registered while 42.4% of male children were registered at the time of the study. This empirical study carried out reported that there is more emphasis for male children to be registered than female, concluded the scholars. This implies that parents with female children might not be very enthusiastic about registering their children due to particularly high emphasis ascribed to male children in the region.
- (iii) **Education:** In the Northern part of Nigeria, it has been reported that there is a low level of education amongst women, therefore having a limited number of women attending tertiary education (NBS cited in Makinde et al., 2016). In Makinde et al. (2016) study, this education gap was argued as a barrier that is creating low or none birth registration of children by parents in the Northern part of Nigeria who are not educated. The mothers are ignorant of the usefulness and importance of birth

registration to their children due to the low level of their own education neither can they understand the procedure.

- (iv) **Economic barrier:** This was also argued by Makinde et al. (2016) as a barrier to birth registration in the Northern region of Nigeria. The late registration fee attached to late birth registration, deter parents in the Northern part of Nigeria just like their Southern counterpart. The scholars however stated that this barrier could be eliminated if the government eliminates the late birth registration fee which is a bottleneck for parents registering their children late.

From the highlighted barriers above, it can be deduced that there are some similarities in some of the barriers preventing parents in Northern and Southern Nigeria from registering the birth of their children. The barrier of culture and belief as well as economic barriers are similar to the two regions. These regional barriers are however also found at the national level in the country.

#### **4.5 Policy Change in Nigeria and the Sustainable Development Goal**

For the government to proffer a solution to the above enumerated barriers, the government might need to initiate or propose a sustainable policy that will assist to improve citizens behaviour toward birth registration. Improving the existing policy or introducing new policies can be beneficial for this.

In order to set a direction for targets set out by the United Nations, particularly the SDG target 16.9.1 related to birth registration with a set date of 2030 as the achievement date. Nigeria in compliance like other countries of the world, made some policy changes in this context. The changes in policy(s) are to align the country's existing programs and policies on birth registration with the SDG goal target 16.9 of providing legal identity for children by 2030. This goal is to be measured by the number of children that have been registered with a civil authority in a country (UNPRVSS, 2014).

Policy changes in Nigeria related to population increase or decrease is linked with birth registration, which acts as the source of its data collection. Therefore, policy changes in Nigeria precede the SDG. However, the implementation of the changes made to policy procedures are expected to help achieve the SDG target 16.9. and increase the birth registration of children in Nigeria.

There are 2 policy documents that will be analyzed in this subchapter in relation to the policy change and alignment to the SDG; the Nigeria's 2004 National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development: Implementation assessment report [NPP] (2015) and Implementation of the SDGs: A National Voluntary Review [IOSNVR] (2017). The NPP report

aim to achieve: (a) recognize new population concerns that require policy action; the birth registration challenges can be categorized under this, (b) to identify the challenges that is preventing the implementation of the population policy; and (c) to harmonize the national policy with the sustainable development goal (NPopC and HPP, 2015). The IOSNVR, (2017) according to the UN, aim to make national policies stronger in relation to the implementation of the SDG, to share challenges, successes and share best practice that can foster implementation at various national level of member countries (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2020). To the Nigerian government, the document aims to validate whether Nigeria is on track in its delivery of the SDG target implementation. These two policy documents will be used to answer sub question three on sustainable development goals.

The analysis of these two documents will deviate slightly from the previous policy documents that have been done in the study. This is attributed to the fact that these policy documents are focused on the SDGs and will assist answer the third sub question of this research study. In this analysis, in addition to checking for the theme relating to measures taken by the government against barriers to birth registration, additional focus will be on the sustainable goals as it is being implemented and entrenched into the national development policies of Nigeria. In this regard, the sustainable development goal being focused on here is goal number 16; peace, justice and strong institutions, target number 9; by 2030, provide identity for all including birth registration. According to the UN, this goal is to be measured by the number of children whose birth had been registered with a civil authority, culminating in birth registration for all by 2030. The analysis of this document will include examining if the policy paper also checks for this measurement as this will accentuate the achievement of the SDGs implementation.

The two policy documents in this section will focus more on the *birth registration* concept as part of the national population policy and its implementation in the sustainable goal agenda while also checking for the core concepts of this study in these documents. On the other hand, less emphasis will be on the themes about the measures being initiated by the government to combat birth registration barriers as the previous policy papers addressed except where these themes like *education*, *wealth* and *distance* are mentioned as it relates to the sustainable goal implementation, its assessment and review.

**(A) NPP:** In this document (NPopC & HPP, 2015), the theme *wealth* and *distance* were not mentioned, the count of these themes returned 0 count. *Education* was mentioned (64) times but not in the context of measures against the barriers of birth registration. It was mentioned in the context of being identified as one of the key tools that will contribute

to the sustainable development of the country. The policy paper argued that when children are educated, it accelerates the development of the nation and thereby contributes to economic development. Therefore, this policy paper emphasized educating the children whose birth had been registered because their registration will increase their right and opportunity to get better education being provided by the government. It did not check the level of education of parents to encourage birth registration which the NDHS policy document checked for.

In relation to policy changes, the NPP policy document argued that the first attempt at revising the population policy was done in 1988 (NPopC & HPP, 2015) and this document being analyzed is the next in series after the 1988 series. The NPP identified policy goals, set targets and implementation strategies that will assist to achieve the sustainable development goals. The themes mentioned in the document to support the implementation of the SDG are outlined in table 4-3 below.

Table 4-3: National Population Policy Themes and Target in Relation to SDG

<b>Target Themes</b>	<b>Policy Target to aid SDG Implementation</b>
Health	Reproductive health, family & fertility management, women's health, child health & survival, male reproductive health.
Environment	Population, development, and environmental interrelationship.
Education	Population and family life education, basic education, and literacy. Eliminate literacy by 2020, achieve sustainable basic education by 2015
Communication	Behaviour change communication (BCC), advocacy and leadership commitment
Population Dynamics	Population distribution, urbanization, migration, special need focus including the elderly.
Youth and Adolescent	Focus on Adolescent and young people
Population and Development Planning	Integration of population variables and reproductive health concern into development planning, programs, and activities.

Socio-cultural barriers and legal support	Elimination of socio-cultural barriers to SDG and provision of necessary legal support to its achievement
Population Statistics	Data collection, analysis, monitoring, evaluation, and research

**Source: Nigeria's 2004 National Policy on Population for sustainable development, 2015.**

In table 4-3 above, the targets set in relation to the policy development of the nation which will enable the implementation of these targets towards achieving the SDGs are highlighted.

The core concepts of this study were also checked in this policy document although the document is focused on the SDGs. This will enable comparison between this policy document and others that have been analyzed earlier in the study for an objective analysis.

*Vital statistics* count in the document returned (1). The document emphasized the importance of collecting vital statistics of the population in subsequent policy revision in order to improve data for economic planning. *Vital registration* count returned (2) and was mentioned as a key population planning activity that should get more funding from the government if the SDG implementation would be termed successful. *Birth register* (0), *birth certificate* (0), *vital event* (0), *vital record* (0), *vital registration system* (0), *statelessness* (0), *procedure* (0). With the above result from the analysis, one of the themes of the study (Education) is evident here and some of the core concepts of the study. It is evident that existence of the themes, mere mention of these themes and the count of their mention in this document will not justify its analysis. Rather, an assessment of the theme or core concepts present in relation to the population policy implementation as entrenched therein, towards the attainment of the sustainable development goal objectives will be carried out in addition.

Therefore, implementation strategy number 9 which states "Population statistics: data collection and analysis; monitoring, evaluation and research" (NPopC & HPP, 2015, p.12) is the theme in the policy document target linked to the concept of birth registration and which is targeted at sustainable development goal 16.9 in this document. The document highlighted the following as being crucial part of the population policy which is to aid the implementation and successful execution of the SDG, health intervention, education, environment, socio-cultural barrier, legal support and statistics. Details of specific plans on the execution of the goals and objectives were highlighted as follows.

a) agencies to be responsible for the execution of the goals will be the NPopC,

b) funding of the project to be received from UNICEF and specific activities that will lead to the SDG achievement with timelines were outlined with the responsible department.

However, the implementation strategy did not achieve its objectives due to the following

- I. Lack of visibility around coordination and the policy time frame: the result of the assessment showed that staff in different government agencies who were meant to work with the NPopC were not aware the NPopC was the government organization responsible for issues coordinated around population, which includes birth registration. Of the staff that were surveyed, about 56% recognize other government agencies like the NBS and the National planning commission (NPC) as the lead implementers of the policy. This reflects a certain level of confusion among all those who were supposed to work together for the actualization of the policy objectives thereby creating a bottleneck. This lack of visibility of the government body indicates the NPopC did not create enough awareness about the agency in charge and made the policy not visible to the target audience.
- II. Multi sector involvement in the policy implementation: it was unclear from the policy documents which other stakeholders aside from government agencies were relevant stakeholders to the policy implementation. It was not stated whether the private sector or the civil societies should be part of the stakeholders.
- III. Roles and responsibility gaps were also highlighted in the policy document as part of the drawbacks of the implementation. Of the staff surveyed, about 30% did mention not being certain of meeting the objectives of the implementation strategy as a result of limited knowledge of their roles and responsibility. It was also mentioned that necessary training and capacity building that is connected to implementing the policy was not received by assigned stakeholders.
- IV. Disseminating the policy objectives did not trickle down to the local level, as such ensuring the objectives are carried out from the lowest set of people was not achievable.

Furthermore, the thematic goal implementation activities also suffered some setbacks and prevented the activities from being actualized. Below are the setbacks cited to have hindered the policy in totality and those specific to the theme about population and statistics which birth registration falls within its scope.

- I. Lack of government funding: adequate funds were not allocated by the government to see through the activities and programs that should aid the implementation of the SDG.

- II. Poor coordination of programs and activities by the donor. This concerns the external organizations responsible for contributing to the activities in various ways. As a result of the poor coordination, inefficiency in gathering relevant data.
- III. Infrastructure strengthening for collecting data on population like vital statistics and census, for example the use of technology in data gathering was not readily available. Thereby gathering citizens information was challenging especially with birth registration.
- IV. Coordination of the activities and policy action like operational guidelines were also highlighted as a setback for the implementation of the SDG activities.

**(B) IOSNVR, 2017:** The second policy document analyzed in this section is the IOSNVR, (2017). The theme *Wealth* was mentioned sparingly, search returned 3 mentions or count of the theme. *Distance* was not mentioned, the count of this theme returned 0 count. *Education* was mentioned (97) times but not in the context of measures against the barriers of birth registration as the investigation in this study is focused. The none mention of two out of the three themes being checked for in this document does not render the document irrelevant for analysis, rather it gives us an understanding of the focus of the policy document in relation to the SDG.

In this document, education was mentioned in the context of a key tool that will contribute to the sustainable development of the country and alleviate poverty especially among the youth which makes up 45% of the Nigerian population as at the time of the review (IOSNVR, 2017). Education is part of the perceived benefit of the citizens when birth has been registered. A well-educated populace can be perceived to be enlightened adequately to follow through recommended procedures set by the government. It is therefore significant that emphasis is focused on this theme in the SDG agenda in this policy document.

Other core concepts of the study that were searched for its mention in the document are as follows; birth registration returned a count of (1) and death registration (1). All other core concepts returned (0) count from their search. Some similar concepts were however discovered to have been mentioned. The word *birth* in itself was mentioned 12 times, *civil authority* (2), *sustainable development* (45), *sustainable development goal* (9). It is important to reference these newly discovered concepts that were not part of the identified core concepts of the study but were found in this document. This is due to its relevance to SDGs and policy development which the fourth sub question of the study will address. *Civil authority* is being mentioned here to check the number of under five children that had been registered with a civil authority in Nigeria as at the time of this policy review. The policy document argued that 44% of children had been registered against a 100% SDG 2030 target.

Sustainable development is mentioned as a long-term developmental objective that can be entrenched into the country's national policy. *Sustainable development goal* is mentioned in relation to ways in which the SDGs set by the United Nations can be embedded into national policy goals to provide better society for all citizens, thereby leaving no one behind. "Leaving no one behind" is the central theme around which all the sustainable goals have been developed, with the focus that citizens of the world will not be deprived by deliberately leaving behind those who do not have access to resources (UNSDG, n.d.). Ensuring that all birth in Nigeria is registered will confirm that no one is left behind and every child can be accounted for, which in turn gives access to resources provided by the government.

This policy document was specific about agencies that were to manage the SDG objectives and activities; an office for the coordination of the SDG was cited to have been established within the presidency for effective coordination of the SDG program. The country created the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (NERGP) to integrate the SDG into the development policy of the nation. In addition, regional and state governments were aligned with this office and its operation to cascade the requirement of achieving the goal to the grassroots. The policy document has broad objectives related to the SDG; this study will however highlight only those related to birth registration as its relevant to this study.

Furthermore, with regards to policy changes and the SDG, the policy document highlighted relevant steps taken by the government and the part of the national policies aimed at respective SDGs. The IOSNVR (2017) identified policy objectives that are related to the SDGs as highlighted in table 4-4 below.

Highlighted below are the focus of this policy document in relation to the study themes identified and the SDG related to birth registration embedded in the national development policy.

Table 4-4: NERGP Objectives in relation to SDG on Birth Registration and the study themes

Study Themes	NERGP Objectives	SDG Integrated Objectives
Wealth	Restoring Growth	Goal 1. No Poverty Goal 2: Zero Hunger Goal 9: Decent work and economic growth. Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production Goal 13: Climate Action Goal 14: Life Below Water



		Goal 15: Life on Land <b>Goal 16: Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions</b> Goal 17: Partnership for all Goals
Education	Investing in People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Inclusion</li> <li>• Job creation.</li> <li>• Improved Human Capital</li> </ul>	Goal 3: Good health and well being Goal 4: Quality Education Goal 5: Gender Equality. Goal 9: Industry, innovation & infrastructure Goal10: Reduced Inequality
No related study themes.	Building strong governance institutions	<b>Goal 16: Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions</b> Goal 17: Partnership for all goals.
No related study themes.	Driving performance and results through vigorous delivery units.	Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth. <b>Goal 16: Peace and Justice, Strong Institutions.</b> Goal17: Partnership for all goals.

**Source: Implementation of the SDGs; A National Review (IOSNVR, 2017)**

In table 4-4 above, the first column on the third row and the fourth column on the last row of the table did not have any of the theme from this study which agrees with the national objectives, however the SDG objectives which aligns with the concept of birth registration in row 3 and 4 is the goal 16; Peace and Justice, strong institutions. In addition, the SDG target 16.9, is the target specific to birth registration. The document argued that 16% (baseline) of children had been registered with a civil authority in 2015 and 44% performance benchmark was done in 2020 towards achieving a 100% registration target in 2030.

According to the policy document, the IOSNVR (2017) presented all the recommended requirements outlined by the UN to meet a standard review document, however some impediments were highlighted in the document which did not address some important areas of the SDG. Below are some of the impediments cited.

There was no evidence in the report that the Local government authorities across all states of Southern and Northern region of Nigeria, were actively involved and monitored for compliance

of the SDGs despite the objectives being communicated to the grassroots. Also, people with disability, aged population, youth population and women lacked the required involvement that will ensure that no one is left behind and the SDGs are actualized by the target date of 2030.

### **Summary of the policy documents Analyzed**

In the analysis of all the policy documents, focusing on the selected themes and the core concepts relating to the research question and sub questions were central to the analysis and not ordinary mention of these concepts was done in the content analysis. The two policy documents analyzed in subchapter 4.5 were expected to have the full implementation strategies and objectives of the SDG in relation to specific areas of the national developmental policy. However, one of the documents was more robust and detailed than the other. The NPP had more bottlenecks hindering the integration of the SDG into the national development policy in the area of population, which covers the birth registration concept. These bottlenecks have been discussed in the NPP analysis section, subchapter 4.5a above. The IOSNVR policy document differs from the NPP due to its more robust and detailed information on the changes to initiate and implement. The IOSNVR policy document is in accordance with most of the set criteria by the UN, but its emphasis was more on the generality of the SDGs and had limited focus on birth registration specifically or the SDG target 16.9 which focused mainly on the birth registration concept. The two policy papers were unanimous on the number of U5<sup>16</sup> children being registered with a civil authority, which is the main goal of the SDG target 16.9.1 relating to the birth registration concept.

On the themes and core concepts of this study, table 4-5 below displays which themes and core concepts from this study were frequently cited in all of the policy documents analyzed. The frequency of the themes and mention of the core concepts are dependent on the focus of the policy papers and its goal in comparison to the themes and core concepts being investigated in the document. Document 1 is the procedure used for birth registration in Nigeria. The absence of the theme of the study in this document can be ascribed to the themes selected being measures to bridge the barriers affecting the registration while document 1 is the procedure where some of the barriers emanated from.

Document 2 emphasis is on the population statistics; document 3 emphasis is on the SDG and its implementation into the national policy, therefore, some of the core concepts and themes not highly featured in this document might be due to its focus. Document 4 is an additional policy document to improve citizens data collection, therefore its emphasis is on various

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<sup>16</sup> Under five years old children who had been registered.

citizens information like health, education and standard of living. Document 5 emphasis is on generating citizens data to complement census figures and other available data on population. Therefore, the frequent feature of some of the core concepts and themes in some documents in comparison to less frequent mention in other policy documents can be attributed to the focus of each document and not as a result of no relevance of the concepts to the subject under investigation.

From the selected theme of the study, which are the barriers argued by this study to be hampering birth registration, *Education* appeared in all of the 4 policy documents except the BRA, which is a legislative procedure, suggesting the importance of this theme. Government should therefore create measures around this theme that will eliminate it as a barrier to birth registration.

Table 4-5 Concepts and mention in policy documents

<b>Core Concepts</b>	<b>Document 1 BRA 1992, NO 62</b>	<b>Document 1 NPP</b>	<b>Document 3 IOSNVR</b>	<b>Document 4 NDHS</b>	<b>Document 5 MICS 2016-17</b>
Birth Registration	3	0	2	17	12
Death Registration	4	1	1	0	0
Vital statistics	1	0	0	0	0
Civil Registration system	0	2	0	0	0
Birth Register	1	0	0	0	4
Birth Certificate	1	0	0	7	18
Vital Event	0	0	0	0	0
Vital Record	0	0	0	0	0
Vital Registration System	0	2	0	0	0
Statelessness	0	0	0	0	0
Procedure	5	0	0	26	4
Education	0	64	97	773	975
Wealth	0	0	3	322	640

Distance	0	10	0	6	1
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**Source: Researchers compilation, 2021**

#### **4.6 Second sub-question addressed**

This section answers the second sub-question which is “*What change(s) have occurred in the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5) in the Southern and Northern Region of Nigeria between 2014 and 2019? Are there any differences or similarities in the birth registration procedure in Southern and Northern Nigeria?*”.

Subchapter 4.3 highlighted the changes that occurred to the birth registration process in Nigeria as a whole and at the regional level of Southern and Northern Nigeria. Therefore, it can be affirmed that there were changes to the birth registration procedure in Nigeria between 2014 and 2019. Some highlighted changes as argued by Makinde et al., (2016) occurred between 2012 and 2016. Some of the identified changes are tabulated below.

Table 4-6 Measures Initiated by the government impacting on procedure and birth registration barriers

<b>Year</b>	<b>Measures/Changes</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
2016	Partnership with International organizations like UNICEF, WB, WHO, and local child right organizations. Local government offices to be used as birth registration centres to increase birth registration data.	This is to Increase the collection of citizens' data through birth registration. The local government offices served as additional registration offices to increase spread and proximity to the citizens.
2011	Rapid short message service introduced.	A phone-based platform introduced to increase the submission of birth registration data. This is to encourage timely submission by registration officers. The registering officers will submit all registration data via SMS (short message service). This culminates into quicker data upload and timely issuance of birth certificates.

		This measure was initiated prior to the time of the study but the adoption occurred within the time frame of this study 2014-2019.
2012	Collaboration between NPopC and Ministry of Health via the health care centres.	The Ministry of health and the National population commission (NPopC) collaborated to ensure the health centres provide information about birth registration to the parents during the antenatal care. This is to create awareness and increase the birth registration database through information sharing.

This sub question also answers the question on the similarities and differences discovered in the procedure used in the Southern and Northern region which has been explicitly explained in 4.3.1a, 4.3.1b and 4.3.2 in this chapter. The study revealed that there is similarity in the procedure used in the two regions as outlined in table 4-2 consequent to the legislative procedure set out in the BRA, 1992, NO 62.

The differences identified in this investigation is inherent in the cultural practices of the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria. This is argued by this study to be the time duration that parents choose to register their children. This has been explained in subchapter 4.3.1a and 4.3.1b, however a snapshot of the differences is shown below.

Table 4-7: Differences Observed in Birth Registration Procedure in the Regions

	<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>Northern Region</b>
Time Duration	Time Duration: The Muslims in the Southern region take as long as 7 days to give a name to their children, some Christians take longer. This is	Children are christened without necessarily registering the birth of such children due largely to low education of the parents.

	<p>due to religious and cultural beliefs.</p> <p>Due to this time duration, some births never get registered until there is a need for the birth certificate of the child.</p>	<p>Birth registration is mostly carried out when children have to attend school, which is usually beyond the 60 days stipulated in the procedure.</p>
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#### 4.7 Third sub-question addressed

The third sub question which is “*To what extent are changes aimed at removing the barriers implemented in the procedures of birth registration? (a) Is there a difference between the removal of barriers in the Southern and Northern region?*

*(b) If there were any changes implemented to the procedure, how do they contribute to achieving the sustainable development goal of birth registration?*” will be answered in this subchapter based on the documents analyzed in sub-chapter 4.5.

The birth registration procedure in Nigeria which has the legislative framework is the Birth, Death (compulsory registration) Act of 1992, NO 69. Between 2014 and 2019, the BRA (1992) was not amended to accommodate any change to remove the barriers, rather the process of birth registration received programs and adjustment in form of measures or changes to strengthen birth registration in Nigeria and the Civic Registration and Vital system (CRVS) in totality.

The barriers that have been identified as bottlenecks to the procedure as discussed in subchapter 4.4, 4.4.1 and 4.4.2, received proposed measures in the policy documents developed to supplement the Birth registration procedural Act rather than the Birth registration Act in itself being modified to accommodate these measures.

Additional measures to eliminate the barriers inherent in birth registration were evident in the process changes as highlighted in subchapter 4.2 of this chapter and Appendix F respectively. These measures are in the form of programs introduced to enhance and strengthen the birth registration process as a population and data collection tool.

Table 4-8 below highlight the barriers and the program selected as measures to eliminate perceived barriers.

Table 4-8 Selected Programs / measures to address barriers

<b>Barriers Addressed</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Information Barrier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Knowledge of procedure</li> </ul>	2015, 2016, 2017	Communication and media campaign for Kaduna, Kebbi, Adamawa and Bauchi states. <sup>17</sup>	IEC/BCC campaign to raise awareness of the significance and process of birth registration.
<b>Geographic Barrier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of Location.</li> </ul>	2016	Partnership with International organizations like UNICEF, WB, WHO, and local child right organizations. Local government offices to be used as birth registration centres to increase the number of locations to the citizens and this in turn will increase birth registration data.	This is to Increase the collection of citizens' data through birth registration. The local government offices served as additional registration offices to increase spread and proximity to the citizens.
<b>Lack of Political Priority</b>	2015	Third Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration	The African Union organized a conference for ministers in charge of the Civil Registration system. Participating countries agreed to take steps to improve their CRVS

<sup>17</sup> All the states mentioned are in the Northern region of Nigeria.

			through capacity building, addressing rights issues, appropriate financing, the application of technology, service delivery, the implementation of evidence-based policies, leveraging the global media, strengthening coordination capabilities and advocacy.
<b>Education of Parents</b>	2012- 2016	Collaboration with Ministry of Health	<p>UNICEF Nigeria (2019) reported that there was an increase in birth registration of under 1(U1) between 2012 -2016 from 2.2M to 11M. This signifies the effectiveness of the collaboration between NPopC and the ministry of health through the hospitals.</p> <p>➤ <b>Intervention:</b> the hospitals served as a venue to educate parents during the antenatal classes on the usefulness of birth registration.</p>



<b>Technological Infrastructure</b>	2013- 2017	Initiate Strengthening Civil Registration System	Rapid SMS and Dashboard for monitoring Registration was deployed to NPopC. The Rapid SMS enabled birth to be registered instantly, the Dashboard enabled the NPopC classify states into RED, YELLOW and GREEN <sup>18</sup> . These served as technological innovations to improve efficiency of birth registration.
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**Source: UNICEF Nigeria, 2019; IDB and UNICEF, 2015.**

*(a) Is there a difference between the removal of barriers in the Southern and Northern region?*

From the literature explored in this study, there is no difference between the Southern and Northern part of Nigeria in barrier removal. All processes and programs deployed to the two regions are identical due to its deployment to the regions from the National level. Adequate steps were however taken to consider the population and the cultural diversity in each region to fit the intervention that will be deployed to remove or minimize the barriers. This is to ensure that the infrastructures deployed to improve birth registration align with the estimated population figure of the region that these infrastructures are deployed to and what is culturally acceptable in the regions.

*(b) If there were any changes implemented to the procedure, how do they contribute to achieving the sustainable development goal of birth registration?*

The legislative framework of the birth registration in Nigeria, BRA, 1992 did not get any change implementation. The changes implemented to the process and procedure of birth registration in Nigeria which were identified in this investigation were in the form of process change and programs implemented to strengthen and increase birth registration in Nigeria. As highlighted in subchapter 4.5 of this chapter, various initiatives to support the SDG 16, target 9 which is

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<sup>18</sup> These colours are for intervention purposes. The technology deployed made it possible to assign the colour code to different states and local governments for monitoring and intervention purposes of birth registration. **RED**: For areas needing intervention and close follow-up, **YELLOW**: For areas requiring selected intervention, **GREEN**: Areas needing monitoring and encouragement (UNICEF Nigeria, 2019).

targeted towards achieving an identity for all by the year 2030 were initiated and implemented by the Nigerian government. To achieve an identity for all by 2030, every birth has to be registered by a civil authority according to the target 9.1 of SDG 16.

These changes made, contributed towards achieving the SDG of birth registration through the political support shown by the government. This support was shown in the form of establishment of an SDG office attached to the office of the president to oversee the affairs of achieving this target. Within the set office, programs and activities to support and achieve the goal were coordinated and monitored, however, some setbacks were experienced in the course of implementation as discussed in the analysis of the policy documents (refer to subchapter 4.5).

Conclusively, this chapter addressed the second and third sub questions which are components of the main research question.

The next chapter is the conclusion chapter of the study and will answer the main question of the research.

## Chapter 5 : CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The chapter reiterates the problem statement, the aim of the study, main research question and sub questions, discusses the findings of the content analysis, outlines the limitation and strength of the study, recommendations for policy reform and further research.

### 5.1 Conclusion

Inadequate citizens' data makes it a challenge for the governments of developing countries to provide adequate social and economic infrastructure for its citizens. Birth registration can be a pathway for these governments to improve the well-being of their citizens through provision of the right social and economic policy decisions using the citizens' data. However, most births in developing countries have gone unregistered and birth registration has been termed low (Makinde et al., 2016). It is reported that only about 46% of U5 have been registered in sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations, 2019). In Nigeria, it is reported that about 17 million children are unregistered, and this makes the children invisible to the government (UNICEF Nigeria, 2019). The low or under-registration of children can lead to social problems such as unemployment, poverty, child marriages, inadequate housing and malnutrition. As a result of these problems, it is important for the Nigerian government and governments in sub-Saharan African countries to investigate low or incomplete birth registration and introduce measures to improve the situation. These measures might improve birth registration to complete, reliable, sustainable and timely in order to reduce estimation of a country's global and national target in relation to tracking their developmental progress (WB and WHO, 2014) in addition to safeguarding social wellbeing of citizens.

This study investigates the measures that the Nigerian government has initiated to eliminate barriers inherent in the current birth registration process and procedure to increase registration figures. The investigation inquired whether procedural barriers decreased the birth registration of children and what impact the measures introduced by the government have had on the identified barriers to improve birth registration adoption by the citizens.

A content analysis of the birth registration procedure in Nigeria, the BRA, 1992 was conducted in addition to the population policy tools in form of NPP, IOSNVR, MICSs and NDHS policy documents in Nigeria. The five policy documents were selected due to their relevance to the birth registration procedure, population activities and relevance to sustainable development goals. Analysis of these documents had been extensively discussed in the data analysis chapter in 4.3 A, B, C and 4.5 respectively. In analyzing the policy papers, the themes that were identified and investigated in the policy papers were Education, Distance and wealth. The core concepts identified in the literature review which were prevalent in the study were also investigated in these policy papers.

The main research question is: *What are the measures that the Nigerian Government can initiate to remove the barriers to the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5 years)?* In addition to the main research question, there are three sub-questions that have been addressed in subchapter 1.4. The first sub-question: *What are the barriers to birth registration in developing countries?* previously addressed in detail in subchapter 2.3 evident on literature reviewed, affirm that the barriers are Administrative, Geographical, Economic, Information, and Institutional Procedures.

The second sub-question: *What change(s) have occurred in the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5) in the Southern and Northern Region of Nigeria between 2014 and 2019? Are there any differences or similarities in the birth registration procedure in Southern and Northern Nigeria?* has been addressed in subchapter 4.6. The changes as derived from this study were not effected on the BRA 1992 document, rather, changes in the form of measures were introduced by the government in Nigeria to improve the birth registration process in the two regions and the CRVS. These measures are: partnering with international organizations like UNICEF, WHO, WB and local child right organizations to increase birth registration data, rapid SMS introduced to facilitate communication of birth information, collaboration between NPopC and the health ministry to provide birth registration information to parents at health facilities during antenatal care visits and creating NPopC offices in local government areas to facilitate ease of access for birth registration. Furthermore, there are similarities in the procedure of registration in the two regions as there is only one legislative document of birth registration, the BRA, 1992 in Nigeria which the two regions are legally bonded to adopt. The differences observed are in the cultural practices of the people from these two regions as revealed by the study (Makinde et. al., 2016)

The third sub-question: *To what extent are changes aimed at removing the barriers implemented in the procedures of birth registration? (a) Is there a difference between the removal of barriers in the Southern and Northern region?*

*(b) If there were any changes implemented to the procedure, how do they contribute to achieving the sustainable development goal of birth registration?* has been addressed in subchapter 4.7. No evidence-based changes or amendments were implemented to the legislative procedure of birth registration (BRA, 1992) in Nigeria between 2014-2019 to remove the barriers identified. There were however programs and measures to strengthen and improve birth registration and the CRVS in general. **a)** There were no differences in the removal of barriers in the two regions of Southern and Northern Nigeria. However, cultural diversity and the population of the region were considered in deploying measures to remove the barriers in the regions. **b)** Changes and measures in form of programs to support the SDG goal 16, target

9 related to birth registration earned political support of the government accomplished through the setting up of the SDG office at the presidency to ensure actualization of programs deployed. This culminated in increased support from the government and improved awareness of the measures deployed.

## **5.2 Discussion**

The findings of this study affirm that there are barriers impeding the procedures and processes of birth registration in the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria. The legislative procedure documented in the BRA, 1992 did not give consideration to possible creation of new states due to population increase, thus NPopC offices in respective local governments were not created in new states. The absence of registration offices in the most rural communities created a bottleneck to successfully implement the policy tool as citizens had to travel far to register their children. This gap in the implementation of the procedure to create these offices in the most rural communities presents itself in the barrier of *distance* which was a key finding in this study.

The first sub question has been answered in the literature review chapter in subchapter 2.3. The findings of this study in answering the first sub question revealed existence of barriers to birth registration in developing countries. There are Administrative, Geographic, Information, Economic, and Institutional Procedural barriers (reference to subchapter 2.3). These barriers cut across developing countries and least developed countries in Sub- Saharan African countries including Nigeria.

The study answered the second sub question by affirming that there were changes to the procedure of birth registration in Nigeria between 2014 and 2019 in form of measures introduced by the government. The study highlighted these specific measures between 2012 and 2016, this time period being the closest to the time scope of this study which is 2014 till 2019. In Table 4-8, changes observed within this time frame had been enumerated in detail. The second sub question affirmed that there were no differences in the procedure of birth registration used in the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria, the national procedure available for implementation is the same in both regions. The findings of the study revealed there are differences inherent in the time frame that children are registered in the two regions, which is associated with cultural practices of the parents within these regions and not the time frame specified in the procedure.

The third sub questions were also addressed in the Data analysis Chapter in subchapter 4.7. The finding of the study revealed that there was no major change to the BRA, 1992 document itself, however there were programs and adjustments to policy tools which served as measures by the government to eliminate the barriers of birth registration in Nigeria. Reference to the

detailed explanation of the answer to this sub question is contained in subchapter 4.5 and Table 4-8. The policy document analyzed specified the programs initiated and implemented by the government at the national and regional levels of Southern and Northern Nigeria. Some of these programs to address the barrier of information, geographic and lack of political priority are communication and media campaigns in the Northern region, creation of ad-hoc birth registration centres at the local government offices and organized seminars for the ministers and those responsible for birth registration and population data.

The findings further affirmed that there are no differences in the removal of barriers in the Northern and Southern region of Nigeria due to the implementation strategies used in deploying the measures to combat the inherent barriers. The programs are deployed from the national level and do not differentiate what measures are deployed to the Southern or Northern region to remove the barriers of birth registration in the two regions.

Furthermore, changes made to the policy and deployed to eliminate or minimize the barriers of birth registration also contributed to achieving the sustainable goal in general with some of the programs being specifically focused on SDG 16 target 9; the target related to birth registration. Education is an example of a change that was cited in the two policy documents: **NPP** and **IOSNVR** as a strategy towards achieving the SDG of birth registration. Both documents argued that when citizens are educated, they are provided with knowledge and awareness of birth registration. Education will eliminate the barrier created by lack of knowledge, categorized under the information barrier. Subchapter 4.5 has a detailed explanation of the programs initiated by the government to support the SDGs of birth registration. Political support was identified as a measure to show government commitment and this support is measured through the creation of an SDG office within the presidency. This creation is to ensure close monitoring and adequate deployment of the SDG program initiatives that the government propose to implement. Partnership with UNICEF and some local NGOs signifies the support of the government to work towards ensuring the measures being implemented support the sustainable goal implementation accordingly.

This study argues that there are various barriers preventing parents from registering the birth of their children in the Southern and Northern part of Nigeria (reference to chapter 4.4). With the discovery of these barriers, the government-initiated series of interventions in form of measures to eliminate these barriers or bring them to a bare minimum. These barriers identified in the study were discussed extensively in various chapters of this study. References to the discussion can be found in subchapters 4.4, 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.

Within the scope of what was possible in this study, I compared broadly the 2 regions in Nigeria, that is, the Southern and Northern region of the country. The investigation ascertained

that there are internal differences discovered in the barriers preventing parents from following the set procedure to register the birth of their children which is due to cultural differences in the two regions, religious and cultural belief. I could however not conduct the research based on state-by-state basis considering that Nigeria has 36 States plus the Federal capital territory within the 2 regions that the study investigated. All these states are highly diverse in culture, religion and in carrying out the registration of children as this study revealed at the regional level. Future research will benefit from looking at the birth registration barriers at the state level, and in addition consider the diversity inherent in these states.

### **5.3 Limitations and Strength of the Study**

Limitations of the study were the challenges of gaining access to the most recent procedure on birth registration in Nigeria through the NPopC. There were no updated documents to reference which had any adjustment or changes made to the existing BRA, 1992 on the website of the NPopC. The documents used for this study were mostly collected from international websites particularly UNICEF, UN, WB, WHO. This elongated the time allocated to the literature search and concluding the study. Additionally, the research topic did not have a wide range of academic literature that had been conducted in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa generally.

However, as the limitations were encountered, there were also some gains to strengthen the study. The study fills the gap in literature on procedural improvement on birth registration that has not been widely researched in Nigeria. As such, this study contributes to the body of knowledge available in the country for further research in the area of procedural improvement as most previous research advocated for completeness, universal birth registration and barriers to universal birth registration. The study will also benefit the academic community and researchers in Nigeria and Africa with the literature used for investigations of this study, due to the use of recent literature retrieved mostly from the international domain. Additionally, this study serves as one of the first studies to investigate the barriers inherent in the procedure of birth registration in Africa by using combination of policy tools in the form of the legal procedural Act, multiple cluster household surveys and population policy documents

### **5.4 Answering the Central Question**

The main research question of this study is:

*What are the measures that the Nigerian Government can initiate to remove the barriers to the procedure of birth registration of children (0-5 years)?*

The three sub-questions previously answered lend support to the main question on the measures that the Nigerian government has introduced to remove barriers in the birth registration procedure. These initiated measures were discussed in chapter 4 with the analysis

of the policy documents and the theories applicable to this study in the literature review chapter. Some of the measures initiated by government as a result of the findings of this study are: i) use of Rapid SMS to communicate birth information to relevant authorities by parents and health workers ii) partnership with international organizations inclusive of NGOs to create awareness, train personnel and increase data collection, iii) collaborate with the ministry of health to have birth registration information and procedure communicated to parents during antenatal visit to the hospital. Subchapters 4.6 and 4.7 expatiate more on these measures that have been initiated by the government.

Although measures were implemented by the government, these measures were not sufficient to generate the required data that the government needed for policy development and infrastructure planning, thereby leaving the country with a huge deficit of birth registration and issuance of birth certificates. For example, this deficit could impact the provision of Covid vaccine for the citizens during the pandemic. Although data collection for this study was halted in the first quarter of 2021, it is unsure if the government implemented further some of these measures in 2021 during the pandemic or in 2022. The measures discovered in the course of this study's investigation had been itemized and explained in table 4-6.

The rational choice theory is the theoretical framework explored to explain the behavior of the parents and the consequences the barriers of birth registration will have on the government and the citizens at both the micro and macro level. The theory affirmed that the micro problem of birth registration which is emanates through the behaviour of parents not registering their children timely or registering them at all, can result in a bigger social problem like unemployment, lack of infrastructure, and lack of social welfare programs due to lack of citizens data. This issue must be resolved at the macro level by the government, only then will the micro problem emanating from the citizens can be resolved. The discovery of parental behaviour in the theoretical framework should be reflected upon and taken into consideration by policymakers and government in the introduction of new measures to eradicate any barrier. This parental behaviour and emergence of social problems can further be a new research area to be investigated. The impact of some set of citizens not observing their civic responsibility could cause a huge problem to the larger society and increase government resources allocation in controlling such problems.

This study can therefore affirm that the main question of this research study has been answered. The answer is; the measures that the government has initiated to eliminate the barriers that were identified in the study between 2014 and 2019 are: a) partnering with International and local child right organizations to increase birth registration, b) SMS service platform to increase submission of birth registration data, c) local government offices being



used as birth registration centres to bring services closer to parents and d) collaboration between NPopC and ministry of health to educate mothers about the importance of birth registration in the health facilities during antenatal care. Conclusively, most of the measures introduced had various positive impacts, however, the measures have not pushed birth registration to reach a universal stage.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations for Policy**

- I. This research discusses from a policy perspective on birth registration procedures, the policy documents show that there is a gap in knowledge of the procedure and education of the parents. Policy reform on procedure of birth registration should focus on the use of media to educate the parents in local languages in the Southern and Northern region of Nigeria, eliminating the barrier of education and knowledge. When this is done, there could be better understanding of the importance of birth registration and therefore eliminate the absence of data which makes it impossible for the government to identify children who are forced into child marriages, early enrolment into military and child trafficking. Without birth registration, it is evident that determining the age of a child will be challenging.
- II. Policy reform to the birth registration procedure should be tailored to the local realities and should be varied geographically. The findings of this study ascertained that there is variation in the process adopted at the regional levels to register children, therefore policymakers should look into adopting the regional variables and adapt this to policy reform. For example, introducing technological infrastructure in the rural areas and enhancing those in the urban areas can make a huge difference.
- III. Another key priority for policymakers is to take into consideration the incessant increase in population and tailor any reforms to changes in population size and modify the procedure to such. For example, there was no consideration for re-issuance of birth certificates to citizens born before the introduction of the BRA, 1992 in the current procedure.

In addition to the policy reform recommendations, the following should be considered for practitioners and policymakers working toward improvement of birth registration.

- I. Local community leaders and religious leaders can serve as stakeholders and collaborators in the communication process and be involved in disseminating information to the local people and also assist to register birth. These Leaders are well respected in their community and are highly referenced, therefore dissemination of

information and collection of birth registration data through these stakeholders might increase birth registration eliminating the barrier of distance and economic barrier.

- II. Create NPopC mobile offices in the rural areas that can service more than one community at a time. This will reduce resources allocation for physical offices and eliminate the barrier of distance in the remote locations.
- III. Create technology use by recording birth registration and other vital events, prioritize and allocate adequate budget. This ensures safe archival and retrieval of birth registration information and makes issuing birth certificates faster and timely.
- IV. The use of SMS to report birth information to the registrars should be accorded a national priority. This will culminate in timely submission of birth information and dispatch of birth certificates eliminating the barrier of technological infrastructure. With a prediction of 140 million mobile phone users by 2025 (guardian newspaper, 2021), the use of SMS should be a continuous strategy for improvement.
- V. Merge the NPopC and NIMC as one government agency to collaborate with the health ministry. The NIN as a unique identifier should be issued at birth and documented in the birth registration policy thereby improving data collection for economic and social development. This merger and collaboration would eliminate the barrier of disconnect between government institutions.

#### **5.5.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

- I. The research will benefit from using both qualitative and quantitative data gathering conducted across the selected states in Nigeria. With the diversity in culture, researchers can adopt local languages to deploy primary data gathering which might stimulate increase responses and insight for the study.
- II. Comparison of the procedures in two developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa will benefit from more insightful information that can produce recommendations for best practice in other least developed countries studies on birth registration procedure improvement.
- III. Further study can be done on the behaviour of parents towards birth registration and its impact on societal problem.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Copy of birth certificate

Form B.2

Caution: Any person who (1) Falsifies any of the particular on this certificate or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true knowing it to be false is liable to prosecution

**ORIGINAL**

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**  
**NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION**

**Certificate of Birth** A18\_32150651

Issued under the births and Deaths Etc. (Compulsory Registration) Decree No. 69 of 1992

Registration Centre \_\_\_\_\_

Town/Village \_\_\_\_\_

L.G.A. \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Entry No. \_\_\_\_\_

This is certify that the birth, details of which are recorded herein has been registered on \_\_\_\_\_

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ at this registration centre \_\_\_\_\_

1. Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Surname first) \_\_\_\_\_ (In block letters)

2. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

4. Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Town/Village \_\_\_\_\_

5. Full name of Father: \_\_\_\_\_ (Surname first) \_\_\_\_\_ (In block letters)

6. Full name of Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ (Surname first) \_\_\_\_\_ (In block letters)

Place of Issue: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Registrar \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Registrar \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix B: Nigeria Birth and Death Registration Act specifying procedure of birth registration**

Section 7 - Registration of Births in Nigeria

Section 8 - Persons Responsible for Registering Births

Section 9 - Persons to Give Information Concerning a Birth

Section 10 - Time Limit for Registration

Section 11 - Registration of Name Subsequent to Registration of Birth

Section 12 - Registration of Birth of Child Out of Wedlock

Section 13 - Persons Baptising


Section 14 - Persons Performing the Naming Ceremony

Section 15 - Certificate of Registration of Birth

Section 16 - Registrar May Summon Persons to Register Births

**Appendix C: Birth attestation (Birth Before 1992)**

**NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION**  
12 - 14 BABS ANIMASHAUN STREET,  
P.M.B. 12628, SURULERE,  
LAGOS STATE.

 **A**  
No 003520

Passport Photograph

For Office Use: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**BIRTH ATTESTATION REQUEST FORM (A)**

NAME OF APPLICANT (Surname first) \_\_\_\_\_

SEX: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA (LGA) \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF ORIGIN (NIGERIA): \_\_\_\_\_

VILLAGE/TOWN OF ORIGIN: \_\_\_\_\_

LGA OF ORIGIN: \_\_\_\_\_

HIGHEST EDUCATION QUALIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF CURRENT PLACE OF DOMICILE: \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF PLACE OF WORK: \_\_\_\_\_

FATHER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

VILLAGE/TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D. List of UN Vital Event Definitions

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### List of UN Vital Event Definitions

1. Birth Registration: Official recording of the birth of a child being carried out by the government within a specified time frame.
2. Death Registration: Official recording of death being carried out by government agencies within respective states in the country. This occurs after the permanent
3. Fetal Death: Death of a child before its complete conception in the womb of its mother.
4. Marriage: This is the process by which the union of spouses is legally consummated.
5. Adoption: This is the act of taking and caring for children other than one's own children. It is always backed by the law of a country.
6. Divorce: Official dissolution of a marriage that allows the spouses involve to have a right to enter into another marriage contract according to the law of the country.
7. Separation: The dissolution of a marriage according to the laws of the country. The right to remarry is not conferred on the couples in this situation.
8. Legitimation: This occurs when an individual is conferred with the status of someone born in a marriage legally.
9. Annulment: This occurs when a marriage between two parties are dissolved by the authorities assigned to such activities according to the laws of aa country.
10. Recognition: Occurs when the paternity of a child who was born out of wedlock is legally acknowledged.

Source: UN Principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (2014).