

Strengthening Societies and Families through Strict Life Planning and Family-Building Policy: A Basis for National Policy Creation and Amendments

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Abstract

Family is the seed of civilizations and as we all know, the basic unit of society. This is where one's growth is expected to start and it is the parents who are tasked to establish a foundation to their children. Society however is the bigger picture, but with a different setting as people follow laws, observe ethics, and work for their living, with a Government that ensures mobilization of all resources within its scope of authority. This study revolved around issues that have affected societies and challenges that have been faced by families, and the author's recommended solution. The results show that overpopulation, poverty, road traffic congestion, and failed marriage among others are detrimental to the environment, social well-being of people, and the economy. It was further determined that such societal and family issue has serious negative implications to the holistic development of a child and to his future, thus, affecting quality of life in the entire society.

The researcher also found out that societal issues are linked to the challenges faced in a family, thus, challenges experienced in families once solved could solve societal issues, and vice versa. It is concluded that a National Policy that strictly observe responsible Life Planning and Family Building would solve the issues. Amendment of Laws that would prevent the creation of the said National Policy is highly suggested.

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1. Introduction

The Philippines based on the report of the Commission on Population of the country on July 26, 2017 is ranked 13th among countries with the biggest population in the world with an estimated of 104.3 million people residing in the country by that time. The Philippines however is ranked 72 worldwide in terms of land with an area of 300,000 km², *United Nations Statistics Division (2006)*, which evidently is a small country compared to countries with almost the same population. A number of studies have already proved that the

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Philippines is overpopulated with a population density of 358 people per square kilometer, *World Bank (2020)*. It may be not overpopulated throughout the country but Metropolitan Manila as the economic hub is establishing a name in behalf of the entire nation, which clearly is overpopulated. In an Interview with Mads Nissen, author of the article entitled: Overpopulation in Manila, which was published in *prospekto.net* on 2006, Dr. Emily Bernardo, the leader of the Family Planning Unit of Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital in Manila, said that lack of information is one of the leading causes of overpopulation in the country. Dr. Bernardo said that the poorest social groups are incredibly ignorant; they lack of knowledge on how a woman becomes pregnant, and most of them had never heard of prevention or contraceptives. However, it has been proven in my previous research entitled: Social Media, Filipinos, and National Key Issues in the Philippines: A Macro Analysis, that poverty causes ignorance, thus, to solve overpopulation, ignorance has to be solved, and to solve ignorance, poverty has to be solved.

Filipinos living in poverty is estimated at 16.6% or 17.6 million out of the nation's population, *Philippine Statistics Authority (2019)*. In Metropolitan Manila alone, there are millions who are under the poverty threshold, 1.74 million of which are illegal settlers, *Tiamzon, Mutuc, Valdez (2016)*. In the study conducted by *Tiamzon, Mutuc, and Valdez (2016)* entitled: Over Population: The Culprit of an Economic Tragedy in the National Capital Region (NCR) Metro Manila, Philippines, people who are living as illegal settlers could not afford education which requires other expenses such as pocket money and transportation, this as a result forces children to find sources of income at an early age which in most cases end up scattered all around selling different wares or working in odd jobs. The study also found out that overpopulation resulted to circumstances that could be deterrents to investment, and disruption to economic growth and to the operations of Industries. The Authors also shared information from a Book written by Carolyn Kinder on 2015, stating that overpopulation can result to poverty.

These data justify that the government should really do something to manage the rapid population growth in the country. As suggested by *Tiamzon, Mutuc, and Valdez (2016)*, there is a need to strictly enforce bills and laws that have serious affiliation for responsible parenthood including legal birth control. The author of this research further suggests the creation of a law or a national policy that will strictly and detailedly guide every Filipino towards life planning and family building.

2. Method

This study assessed the recommended solution of the author towards overpopulation, road traffic congestion, poverty, and failed marriage. Data from published researches, government reports, and news articles which information were validated were collated and qualitatively analyzed to determine various impacts of societal and family issues. The recommended solution of the author- creation of a new national policy on strict life planning and family-building, and amending laws that prohibits the government to take part in the professional and personal lives of people, was assessed showing its implications to the economy, social well-being of people, and the environment.

3. Discussion and Results

3.1. Societal Issues: Poverty, Overpopulation, and Road Traffic Congestion

Poverty has a lot of negative implications; it leads to physical and mental disorders, *Sleek (2015)*; decreases child's readiness for school and increases the likelihood to experience disadvantages associated with risk factors such as lower parental education and high family stress that have negative impacts on the cognitive development and academic achievement of a child, *Ferguson et al (2007)*; poor health outcomes with a number of key indicators including infant mortality, low birth weight, asthma, overweight and obesity, injuries, mental health problems, and lack of readiness to learn, *Gupta et al (2007)*. These data are clear indications that poverty is a serious problem, thus, solutions shall be enforced immediately.

Overpopulation is one of the problems in countries where poverty incident is high; it is evident that in countries like the Philippines, people living in poverty tend to have more children than those families with higher socioeconomic status. Overpopulation is when there are too many people for the environment to sustain with food, drinkable water, and breathable air among others. It is the state when the population exceeds the carrying capacity of a place, which will lead to environmental degradation and societal collapse, *Sample (2007)*. In the article written by *Jenny Kleeman (2010)* which was published in The Guardian, she stated that Overpopulation is one of the crises being faced by the world today, and that the number are expected to be unsustainable within the next few years. Kleeman stated that overpopulation in the central region of the Philippines clearly had caused a very low quality of life with a third of the population living under bridges, next to railways, beside flood defenses, and cemeteries. This only proves that overpopulation aside from its negative implications to the environment has serious effects on the lifestyle of people.

While poverty and overpopulation has been seen as problems in several countries, in some countries such as China and the Philippines, aside from these, people are experiencing road traffic congestion. According to *Custer (2019)* in his article published by Dotdash Publishing USA, China's traffic problem has become really bad, highlighting the Highway 10 traffic jam way back 2010; it was 100 kilometers long and lasted 10 days involving thousands of cars. Being the largest vehicle market in the world since 2009, vehicle emission has become a significant source of air pollution in China's cities, *Wang et al (2019)*. Road Traffic Congestion in the Philippines on the other hand, particularly in its central region is so bad, it has been named as the 2nd worst by TomTom International BV in its Traffic Index 2019 report. This social problem has resulted to the country losing 3.5 billion Philippine Pesos daily, *Japan International Cooperation Agency (2018)*.

One of the objectives of the recommended national policy is to strengthen societies, thus, to solve overpopulation, poverty, and road traffic congestion is the first step. Another objective is to strengthen families, not in terms of size, but to promote high quality of life and protect the welfare of children whose lives are going to be the projected societal status of one country in the future.

3.2. Issues in Families: Failed Marriage and More children in Low Income households

Poverty is one of the main reasons of failed marriages, *Carter (2014)*, which usually leads to family breakdown that negatively affects the children, *Saikia (2017)*. Failed Marriages or partnerships as we all know results to single parenthood which has huge numbers based on statistics. In the United States of America for example, children under the age of 18 living with one parent and no other adults are almost a quarter or 23% of the nation's population, *Kramer (2019)*. The Philippines is somehow grateful because despite the growing

number of solo parents, it is still less with an incident of only 3 million out of the estimated 105 million population, *Philippine Statistics Office (2015)*. However, the number may be huge or small but failed marriage has negative implications to the children; most families experience poverty after a separation, *Fagan & Churchill (2012)*, thus, results to children having an unstable life condition that forces them to work and find sources of income at a very young age, *Radfar et al (2018)*, and engage themselves to property crimes, *Papaioannou (2017)*; it causes poor academic performance, psychological problems, and delinquent behavior among students for children who go to school, *Bubelwa (2014)*, which would be a deterrent to the promotion of the student to a higher grade level, and a restraint to employment opportunities, *Hickman (2015)*, that leads to the decline of a person's psychological and physical well-being, loss of psychosocial assets, social withdrawal, and further family disruption, *Brand (2015)*.

With these data presented, parents should control the growth of their family in terms of size most especially if the household has limited budget. However, Families living in poverty tend to have huge family memberships, *Orbeta (2005)*. In the study of *Betson & Michael (1997)* entitled: Why So Many Children Are Poor, it has been proven that members of poor families are more than those of non-poor families because adults in poor families tend to have more children than those in non-poor families with a ratio of 1.61 children per adult and 0.93 children per adult respectively. And as a wakeup call to all, Children growing up in a poor family are seven times more likely to self-harm and thirteen times more likely to be involved in violent crimes, *Mok et al (2018)*.

With more children experiencing the negative implications of poverty caused by all of these factors, it can be assumed that from one generation to another, societal and family issues would be worse if there will be no intervention.

With the author's belief that to completely solve a problem, one should go through its root cause, the author hereby recommends the creation of a new national policy in countries where overpopulation, poverty, crimes, road traffic congestion, and failed marriage are serious problems-severely affecting societies and families. A new National Policy that would instill responsible Life Planning and Family Building. The researcher specifically suggests a National Policy with the following provisions.

3.3. Recommended National Policy to solve Societal and Family Issues

RECOMMENDED POLICY	EXPECTED BENEFITS	FORESEEN CRITICISMS
1. No Marriage, No Pregnancy Policy: <i>Premarital Pregnancy shall be a crime</i>	1. No more children will be vulnerable to poverty and other associated challenges due to the lack of parental support.	1. Anti-Poor: How about those people who cannot afford marriage but wants to build a family?
	2. No more parents will be vulnerable to problems associated to being a solo parent. 3. No more illegitimate children 4. Lessen the risk of overpopulation	RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. This is not Anti-Poor, this would give those living in poverty as sense of responsibility, and would made them realize that having kids is a privilege gained by only those who can afford to support them all the way, and a secured family is one indicator.

2. No Marriage, No Living-In together Policy: <i>Living-In together unmarried shall be a crime</i>	1. Lessen the risk of premarital pregnancy. 2. Increase the morale of women 3. No more illegitimate children	1. How about the welfare of women whose pregnancy was not planned but still got pregnant prior to getting married. How could they get support if they won't be allowed to be with their partners? RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. There is no such thing as accident pregnancy. Pregnancy can be controlled through a responsible and morally upright relationship. 2. This policy would solve the problem of the increasing number of illegitimate children, teenage pregnancy, and parental separation.
3. Failure to send your legitimate children to school shall be a crime	1. No more children will be vulnerable to poverty and other associated challenges due to the lack of parental support. 2. A responsible and cautious life and family planning will be observed by people. 3. Lessen the risk of overpopulation	1. Anti-Poor: How about those who are living in poverty who cannot afford to send their children to school? RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. This criticism is the main objective of this policy; to avoid those living in poverty to have a huge responsibility that they cannot manage. 2. Having kids but not giving them access to formal education that will be their best ticket to a quality life in the future is selfish move. 3. This policy will make people realize that having kids is to have a responsibility.

4. No Garage, No Car Policy	1. No more road traffic congestion 2. Faster travel time 3. Responsible life planning will be observed by people	1. Anti-Poor: How about those who cannot afford such house size but want to have a decent mean of transportation.
		RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS
		1. If the government will enforce this policy, they will be mandated and pressured to develop a convenient mass public transport. 2. Is it possible to have a house without having a lot? Where would you place the house? In the middle of the air? This is what having a car without a garage literally means. 3. If a person really wants to purchase a vehicle, he/she should be responsible and make sure first that there is a place where he/she could park the vehicle.
5. One Vehicle per Household Policy	1. No more road traffic congestion 2. Faster travel time 3. The Government will be mandated and pressured to develop a convenient mass public transport system.	1. Anti-Rich: How about those people who can afford a number vehicles, and need such number for official businesses.
		RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS
		1. If the government will enforce this policy, they will be mandated and pressured to develop a convenient mass public transport. 2. Based on several studies in countries where road traffic congestion is extreme, most of vehicles on road are private vehicles, thus, contributing more to traffic congestion.

6. Annulment, Divorce, or any kind of separation won't be permitted and shall be categorized as a crime	1. Responsible and cautious dating and partner selection will be observed by people. 2. No broken family, which will contribute in alleviating poverty. 3. Lessen if not totally eliminate the risk of getting married to the wrong person. 4. No more children will be vulnerable to poverty and other associated challenges due to the lack of parental support. 5. No more parents will be vulnerable to problems associated to being a solo parent.	1. How about those women or men who experience violence, cheating, and other similar acts from their partners.
7. Getting pregnant won't be permitted unless the following requirements are met: a. Proof of adequate income sourced from a regular job, sustainable business, and others. Adequate means not lower than the poverty threshold. b. A place of residence which could be a house or an apartment with a pleasant environment. c. A Pledge Form submitted to the Government stating the	1. People living in poverty won't be able to worsen the burden they are experiencing. 2. No more children will be vulnerable to poverty and other associated challenges due to the lack of parental support. 3. No more parents will be vulnerable to problems associated to being a solo parent 4. Lessen the risk of overpopulation 5. Children will be ensured of formal education which will be their best ticket to a quality life in the future that will eventually	RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. This criticism is actually one of the reasons why this policy is suggested; People, with this kind of policy will be extra careful when choosing a woman or a man they want to marry. From the dating and getting to know each other stage, people will be thinking many times before flirting or getting into a relationship. 2. This will also prevent negative implications of broken families to children; psychological challenges, poverty, and low academic performance in school among other, which will be deterrents to children having a good future.

couple's commitment to give formal education to their children. Note: Pregnancy amidst non-compliance to the requirements shall be considered a crime. Children of couples however will be put under the custody of DSWD.	6. contribute to economic growth. Responsible and cautious life and family planning will be observed by people.	RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. We have to focus on regulating pregnancy and not too much on marriage because marriage is two way; decision of both parties. This means that if the marriage fails, it is going to be equally acceptable to both parties, and they will be the only affected. While pregnancy is one way; it is only the decision of the parents and not the child. This means that if the parents fail as a provider, aside from the parents suffering from a family breakdown and being vulnerable to poverty, the child who did not choose the situation in the first place will be extremely affected psychologically and economically. 2. If the actions or practices of the people are negatively affecting the economy and other lives in various ways, the government has the right to implement precautionary measures. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure social justice and development, and economic progress.
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8. Marriage would still be the same. People will have the freedom on this. No policy or criteria to be followed.	1. People will still be able to choose the right time, the right place, and the right person for them, but with caution in choosing the right partner for them since we are preventing separation for the welfare of the children if there is any.	1. The researcher was not able to think of any possible criticism since this is the current practice of most if not all countries.
9. Two Children per Family Policy	1. Lessen the risk of overpopulation 2. Children will be ensured of formal education which will be their best ticket to a quality life in the future that will eventually contribute to economic growth. 3. People living in poverty won't be able to worsen the burden they are experiencing. 4. No more children will be vulnerable to poverty and other associated challenges due to the lack of parental support.	1. "No one should tell people not to have children. It is a matter of freedom, personal autonomy and privacy" – Dr. Margaret Somerville, McGill University, Center for Medicine, Ethics, and Law
		RESPONSE TO CRITICISMS 1. If the actions or practices of the people are negatively affecting the economy and other lives in various ways, the government has the right to implement precautionary measures. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure social justice and development, and economic progress.

3.3.1. General benefits the National Policy would bring

1. No School Congestion Problems.
2. No Road Traffic Congestion Problems.
3. Poverty if not totally wiped out, will be managed and controlled.
4. People living in poverty won't be able to worsen the burden they are experiencing. This would contribute in poverty alleviation, thus, will give the government opportunity to provide more assistance to people living in such condition.
5. No Broken Family, which will contribute in alleviating poverty and will lessen child labor and crimes. This would also lessen the risks of children experiencing psychological challenges.
6. No more children suffering from lack of parental support, which will contribute in alleviating poverty since children will be ensured of formal education, thus, having access to further career and life opportunities.
7. Lesser if not zero property crimes since poverty is taken care of.
8. Better access to health care services, higher education, and other essential government services.
9. Tolerable use of natural resources.

10. Minimize poverty incident since people who really wants to have a child will strive to achieve a better life condition. This will be their motivation to stop bad habits; vices among others, and to just focus on professional and personal development.

In addition, one of the problems in Philippine Society is ignorance particularly on Key National Issues, Ipsos MORI (2017), which is an indicator of ignorance towards laws. As part of the holistic development of a person, and given that as part of the society, it is a responsibility to act ethically, awareness towards laws is needed. The Government shall then consider adding Philippine Laws as a subject in College; the researcher suggests two semesters for this subject.

3.3.2. Exemptions: Implementation of the recommended National Policy

This recommended National Law is recommended to be non-retroactive. People who are solo parents disregarding marital status will be guided by all provisions but exempted on getting married. While for those who already have more than two children, they will keep the custody of their children, but they won't be allowed to have more.

4. Conclusion

This research found out that societal issues and challenges experienced in families are associated with each other. Overpopulation is caused by the uncontrolled birth rate, which is observed mostly in countries with high poverty incident, and where people living in poverty were identified as major contributors. It is further determined that overpopulation leads to several negative implications to the society; environmental degradation, road traffic congestion, limited access to government services, and poverty. The study also discovered that poverty leads to a number of societal and family issues; physical and mental disorders experienced by people, poor health outcomes, and failed marriage that negatively affects children's well-being. However, it was also revealed that failed marriage aside from being an effect of poverty is also the cause of it, thus, resulting to negative implications to children; psychological challenges, poor academic performance, involvement in crimes, and being forced to work to have a source of living. Such effect would also lead to limited employment opportunities, which would result to social withdrawal and the continuous life in poverty cycle- from the child's parents to him, to his family, to his children, to the family of his children, so on and so forth. It is further determined that societal issues are linked to the challenges faced in a family, thus, challenges experienced in families once solved could solve societal issues, vice versa.

The recommended National Policy is hereby concluded capable of solving these problems. Despite possible criticisms and objections, this would lead societies and families to positive results as reflected on the expected benefits. Further research towards this topic is encouraged to justify or critique the results.

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