Introduction

As society is becoming more efficient and sustainable so are the people in it. Everything must be faster, better and cheaper, and people no longer like to wait. This has started to impact western mentality towards raising a family. People started to realise that bearing children has a cost, which does not fit into the idea of efficiency. Where the decrease of fertility rates is a by-product of the need to be efficient, we can consider the decrease of birth rates to be of similar effect as climate change. Climate change is a by-product of efficiency and industrialization and impacts the economy of major developed countries; this is

Definition of Key Terms

Birth Rate (Natality) vs. Fertility Rate:

Fertility rate is a rate calculated annually and is defined as the amount of children a woman will bear in accordance with prevailing fertility rates specific to her age, assuming she lives to the end of her childbearing years. The average fertility rate considered by scientists as most beneficial for the population of a country is 2.1 children per woman. This is calculated differently from the birth rate of a nation. The birth rate is calculated by the number of live births annually in proportion to the population of a country; this is usually expressed in thousands.

Anitestablishmentairian:

A political left wing movement that personified the United States during the 60s, that establishes the government as a corrupt, repressive, exploitative or unjust. Supporters of this movement are also known to often be supporters of Social Justice Movements such as the
black lives matter movement, and gay rights movements that were very popular during this time period.

**Economic Growth:**

Economic growth is the increase in production of goods and services in a national or international market. This can be measured in nominal or real terms, where real takes into consideration inflation. Over time, a drastic increase in economic growth can cause inflation, which will in turn cause hyperinflation, which will create a self-reinforcing loop that leads back to economic growth. This is due to the fact that consumers will spend more if they know that a good or service will be worth less in the future.

**Financial Crisis:**

Financial crises are identified by the steep decline in value of assets, which will leave firms in debt financially and a liquidity shortage. Because there is such a sudden decrease in asset value, investors will often try to sell all their available stock and withdraw their money from savings because they fear that their assets will drop in value. A financial crisis is often in the form of a stock market crash, a currency crisis, or the bursting of a speculative financial bubble.

A stock market crash is the sudden decline of stock market prices across a significant area of a stock market. This is usually due to changes in the speculative bubble; a speculative bubble is formed in a market when prices fluctuate due to what buyers and consumers expect from a product or firm, usually this is in the form of overconfidence in the product, good or service; when this bubble bursts, the prices will drop significantly. A currency crisis is a crisis that is often the result of a stock market crash or any other type of financial crisis. A currency crisis is caused by the serious doubt by the public that a country’s central bank has enough reserves in order to uphold the currency’s fixed foreign exchange rate.

**Population Lag:**
Population lag occurs when the population, usually of a more economically developed country drops below replacement fertility, meaning they do not produce enough offspring to completely replace the population of the previous generation. Population lag is the momentum that is carried on for some generations after this decline which postpone the negative effects of this fertility drop.

**Background Information**

The decline in Birth Rates started more than five score years ago. Socio-economic evaluation suggests this is due to the antiestablishmentarianism movement that identifies the 60s. This movement includes the many civil rights victories, the sexual emancipation, feminist movement, establishment of the LGBTQ+ movement, and the overal opposition of the people against the government. This was the time that the USA was at war with Vietnam, and there was a huge opposition to this, which encouraged other groups to rise up and follow.

These movements were debilitating for the overall reproduction in developing countries. Women started getting college degrees and starting careers, waiting until later to start a family and having children. Likewise, people that previously feared coming out as gay, were gaining rights and were now encouraged to do so, which greatly reduced their options in having children. Additionally, anti-conception methods such as the condom were becoming more widely distributed and abortion was becoming more accepepted and in some states even legalized.

Although these movements are what gave way to the dropping birth rates, the stock market crash in 1987 and the global financial crisis in 2007-2008 really weakened young people financially. People in their twenties, that had just come out of college and were starting their careers were hit the hardest by this crisis; they were not financially apt to support a family and chose instead to save these costs and wait until they were more financially developed. This created a huge generation gap, and was very harmful to these country’s demographics and eventually to their labour force and factors of production. The reason that many developed countries haven’t felt the immediate repercussions yet is because of what population experts call, “population lag.” Population lag is caused by the momentum of a generation being carried on for five or six generations until real demographic changes will be felt. Until those
demographic changes become apparent, no significant impact will be felt in a country’s economy.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) is a United Nation commission that focuses on issues of socio economic nature. They organise a myriad of conferences that are based on these issues which include the decline in economic growth of nations and the drop in birth rates. These conferences in include, The International Conference for Financing for Development, the United Nations Summit on the Millenium Development Goals, Summit for Refugees and Migrants.

The UN DESA has published many working papers related to this topic; although they are focused mainly on these issues in developed countries, they still come up with relevant solutions to issues very closely related to this issue such as economic inequalities and financial instabilities in young people. Although these working papers are not allowed to enforce any policies or regulations, they still allow these topics to be discussed and become more accessible.

China

China’s “one-child policy” introduced nationwide in 1979 is the most famous example of this issue on this topic. This social reform was implemented by the communist government in order to quickly increase the economic growth in China. They figured that the income per citizen would increase if they decreased the total amount of citizens. This worked in the short-run as the income per capita increased from $200 to $10,000 in about 36 years.

Although this reform seemed to reach its intended effect, as China’s GDP per capita shot up, economists started to notice a trend that they believed would become the downfall of the
Chinese economy. The national population began to age tremendously, a forecast suggested that by 2050, one-third of the Chinese population would be above the age of 65 and the working class would be depleted. Due to this threat to the economy, the Chinese government withdrew the police three years ago and has changed its campaign from encouraging people to have less children to encouraging to have as many as possible.

There is one issue that has been brought along by the policy however; people no longer want to have children. They discovered that starting a family is expensive and they are much better off financially if they don’t start one. This is an issue that population scientists have discovered in many developing countries as well. People in their twenties that have just completed their university education prefer to focus on developing their career and wait until later to have children, sometimes, in the case of a woman, until they have matured too much to have a child.

United States of America

The fertility of citizens native to the United States has reached that below replacement. Meaning that the current generation produces less offspring than that of the previous generation. The fertility of immigrant citizens or citizens from low-income classes have an above replacement fertility, however, population scientists predict that this will level out as higher income and education is applied to second and third generation immigrants persuading them to make the same decisions as their fellow native citizens and produce less offspring. This will cause a depletion in the population that has been predicted to hit in the coming decades due to a so-called “population lag.”

This population lag is also the reason that there has been no significant effect on the American economy since the 60s. If we relate the economic growth to America’s GDP per capita, the only significant change in the past 25 years is a brief drop in 2008-07 which is in accordance with the global financial crisis at the time. Although there hasn’t been any significant changes in the economy, economists expect that the American economy experiences a momentum similar to the one that the population is currently experiencing, the American economy experiences something similar. For this reason, once the effects of declining fertility rates start taking their effect on the population, we will see similar changes to the US economy.

United Kingdom
Although birth rates have increased in West European countries, fertility is still dangerously low. The British government has been seeking a solution to this issue and have resorted to encouraging the employment of a young and able workforce from outside nations, however this will only prove to have short-term effect unless these people decide to remain in the UK. Many european nations face similar issues as the UK and US and they are taking similar measures, however, it still remains very difficult to find long-term solutions to this issue as it is an intrinsic social issue that lies in the eternal will of public and private institutions to grow and improve.

Where the US economy has remained constant over the past years, the British economy has been experiencing a steady increase if we examine charts of the past 25 years (GDP per capita). This again, with a slight decrease in economic growth in 2007, which is during the global financial crisis. The UK, as opposed to the US has been looking for solutions to their population issues. They have been experimenting with replacement migration in order to fix the gap in the workforce. They also, just as many other European countries accepted a large amount of immigrants during the immigrant crisis of 2015 which added a substantial amount to people to their population which will show in their countries’ GDP per capita’s in the coming years.

Japan

The fertility rates in Japan have fallen from 2.75 births per woman in 1950 to 1.49 in 1990. This new rate is still decreasing and has reached below replacement fertility causing a danger to the age distribution of the population. As the reproductive rate in Japan decreases, we also see a very steady increase in life expectancy. Where only 4.6% of the Japanese population was above the age of 65 in 1950 that percentage had now tripled to about 14.9%. This has created a dangerous bulge of retired people and a shortage of able workforce in Japan which can have dangerous effects on the population.

Timeline of Events
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914-1920</td>
<td>The American army starts providing and encouraging the use of condoms amongst their soldiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Poland is the first European country to legalize abortion in cases of rape and threats to maternal health</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Civil rights victories, the sexual revolution, the women’s movement, the gay liberation movement, and anti-war activism.</td>
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<td>1960s</td>
<td>First major decline in birth rates since the industrial revolution</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>United Nations World Population Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 25, 1980</td>
<td>Implementation of China’s one child policy</td>
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<td>January 22, 1980</td>
<td>Case of Roe v. Wade officially legalizing abortion across the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 19, 1987</td>
<td>Dow Jones stock market crash, affected stock markets globally.</td>
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<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>Global financial crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2013:</td>
<td>Relaxed of China’s one-child policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Immigration crisis in the European Union</td>
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**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

**World Population Plan of Action:**
The “World Population Plan of Action” is a plan drafted during the United Nations World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974. It outlines that member states recognise that there is a correlation between population and economic growth. It outlines possible regulations that member states can adopt to prevent this from becoming an issue in their country. These regulations include but are not limited to, the development of a population plan, the prevention of mortality and child mortality, the availability of family planning education to the public, upholds the right of couples to determine the amount of children they may have, etc.

This plan was developed decades ago, when the political climate was still very different. Women’s rights were not as developed and abortion was not legal in many nation states. Discrimination against women and queers has also changed positively which also changes the attitude towards them having children. Women are no longer required to stay home and rear children, and queers have gained rights to marriage and adoption.

Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat: Replacement Migration

This is a report that outlines the population in different countries and how replacement migration has affected the population demographics of these countries. It outlines the importance of implementing regulations that support replacement such as the improvement of national immigration policies, and investment in the process of immigration so that people will be more willing to stay in the long term. This report also outlines other ideas that support issues with population. It states that women must be able to contribute equally to the development of a nation as their male counterparts and that men should share the responsibility of maintaining a family and rearing children. It also asserts the necessity of the implementation of rules and regulations that strive to eradicate poverty (and child mortality with it), and create better working conditions in underdeveloped countries.

This report has been discussed and referred to at many international conferences in the past. These conferences include the World Conference of the Women’s Year, and five years later in 1980 at the World Conference for the Women’s Decade. UN World Population Conference in 1974, and the Tripartite Conference of 1976. This is important in order for the
topic to become regarded as more serious and in order for countries to take action in the form of regulations and programs.

**OECD-UNFPA-MOHW-KIHASA Joint Conference on Low Fertility**

This joint conference by the OECD, UNFPA, MOHW and KIHASA acknowledges that the issue of declining birth rates is an issue that no longer just plagues developed nations but is starting to become a concern for underdeveloped countries as well. It elects sustainability as a reason for declining birth rates. In a speech by the chairman of the UNFPA, it’s said that, “Recognizing these demographic transitions as an opportunity and not as a threat is paramount, and falling fertility levels do not necessarily stand in the way of a second demographic dividend. If well addressed, ageing and low fertility may lead to better policies.” She goes on to state that we must focus on policies that defend reproductive rights and decreasing child mortality and that politicians must acknowledge every human being’s individual potentials and abilities.

**Possible Solutions**

**Prevention of Infertility: Education in Schools and Communities**

Educational programs must may be implemented in secondary schools to educate youth about possible causes and effects of infertility. People must be aware that the actions they choose to take impact the community as a whole and therefore these programs must extend to entire communities as well. Although it must be clear to them that infertility is a problem that affects society people must be able to make decisions on their own regarding fertility. These programs can be organised by private or public institutions, however for them to have an impact on a country as a whole, they must be uniformly implemented amongst a nations.

**Promoting Natural Conception: Clinics and Advice**

The majority of infant mortalities and miscarriages are due to poor health care and lack of specialized medical staff. This is an issue that plagues both developed and underdeveloped
countries. In developed countries with socialised healthcare, many insurances don’t include abortions or ivf programs which means that people shy away from these services. In developed countries there is a different reason for the lack of obstetricians is due to the brain drain that low-income countries often experience. This is due to the fact that people that have a higher education and the knowledge necessary in their home country often immigrate to more developed countries in the hope to earn more. This is disastrous for a country’s healthcare system but in this case also for expecting mothers. For this reason there should be the establishment of conceptions clinics that are able to provide both fertility advice and ivf programs should be considerably subsidized by a government so that they are able to provide both safe and affordable services.

Easing Economic Uncertainty

The main reasons that young people decide against starting a family or expanding it is because they fear the costs that come with it. One solution to this is creating more affordable housing so that young families do not feel confined by the size or capacity of their house and will be more willing to purchase a house that will fit a growing family. Another solution to this economic uncertainty is the implementation of free education and childcare in a country. This will not only ease the uncertainty surrounding the starting of a family but also the burden that the children will have on the career of their parents; this will be extremely important especially in the younger years of the child as that is when parents tend to struggle between the balance between career and family life the most.

Flexible Part-time Career Posts for Mothers:

The reason that so many young couples decide to wait until later to start a family is due to both having a job that consumes much of their time. If a woman decides to become a mother, then her employer must be able to accommodate this for her. She must be given reasonable hours and sufficient maternity leave after the child has been born, and this all must not affect her position within the company and her salary per hour. This is especially important for single mothers that must sustain a job while also rearing her children.
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