



DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS: THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF AGING POPULATIONS IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This research paper aims to describe the global populations that are aging at an accelerating rate, particularly in developed nations where advances in healthcare, nutrition, and standards of living have extended lifespans. This demographic shift poses significant social, economic, and political implications that policymakers must address. Alongside this demographic transition, globalization has driven the growth and expansion of business and economic activities across national borders. The compounding effects of aging populations and globalization present complex challenges that require thoughtful, multifaceted policy responses from governments and social institutions. This research seeks to provide insights to help policymakers and stakeholders navigate the profound societal transformations stemming from the aging of developed world populations.

Keywords: Aging populations, Demographic shift, Age pyramids, Developed nations, Lifespan extension, Healthcare, Nutrition

Introduction

Demographers continue to report that the global population is aging and that the corresponding number of elderly people is rising steadily. This demographic is even more evident in developed nations where societal progress such as health care, nutrition, and overall standard of living have escalated lifespans. In this respect, as societies get faced with increasing population of elderly people, these have social, economical and even political impacts.

The objectives of this research paper are:

1. To describe the main tendencies concerning age pyramids of developed countries and how they got to be like this.
2. To explore some of the main sociological implications of this shift are changes in lifestyles, family structures, pressure on sociopolitical systems of welfare, structure of workforce, consumption behavior, and cohesiveness of communities.
3. To identify what some of the issues are with aging populations and what the possible approaches



to reducing negative impacts might be.

Globalization on the other hand involves the growth and expansion of business and economic activities across national borders. While the aging of populations in developed nations has been a gradual process that has occurred over the past few decades. The factors such as low birth rates and compare with the high standard life expectancy especially to the old age group people that has increased the number of old age persons in the total population. The impact of such demographic transition is profound on social, economic, and political contexts, thus, it is vital for the policymakers and relevant social institutions to identify possible implications of such change and how best to deal with them.

Literature Review:

The development of new trends in family relationships and dependency between generations has been among the key interests of sociological aging research fields. Researchers have observed that the majority of elderly persons prefer to live alone in their homes or in elderly homes instead of going to live with their sons and daughters. This transition away from the 'dragon decade' family structure has serious repercussions for the form and extent of the social relationships between elders and younger generations of family members (Donovan & Blazer, 2020).

Dowling 2022, in his article said that due to the increase in physical and ratio in distance between different generations then this leads to the breaking down of essential vices in the family then the dilution of the protective role that families have for elderly people (Dowling, 2022).

Since becoming a 'virtual society' people rely less on direct face-to-face contact compared to previous generations, which can lead to the decrease in value, information, and emotional influence exchange between generations. Drawing from a comparative survey of European families, Syzdlík, (2012) have identified significant differences in patterns of reciprocal exchange of time and money across the generation line, thus pointing out the possible influence of cultural expectations and the shape of the welfare state system on these generational bonds (Szydlik, 2012).

Other factors that have been cited as being associated with high level of loneliness and depression for elderly people include increase in independence and isolation (Boden-Albala et al. , 2005). However, other scholars argue that for some family members their obligations have moved to the engagement of state-based and professionalized caring services and therefore some authors worry about the gradual breakdown of the affective and social relations that were historically available from the family (Shulz & Eden, 2016).

The shifts within the familial dynamics as well as intergenerational attachments do not happen in isolation from the wider social contexts. Decisions people make like the increase in the numbers of women engage in paid workplace, young adults decide to delay child birth or even seek



education and employment from other places besides their parents' home have all helped in the reduction of the multigenerational household model (Kim, 2016).

Finally, a sociological perspective of the dynamics of various family forms can be considered as broad and continuum in nature. Academic production persists in different aspects such as the effects on the emotional state, the models of care for elderly people, and the ways by which culture is passed and recreated throughout generations. This means that studying these trends and, consequently, the potential outcomes will go hand in hand with creating legislation or implementing programs with regard to the growing older generation and establishing better relations between generations.

Strains on Social Welfare Systems

This has put strains in social welfare systems where elderly dominate especially in issues concerning public pensions, health and long term care in developed countries. Academic scholars have focused much research on the developments of these systems' unsustainability issues, especially given the changes in the proportion of the population of retirees to working population (Rudolph et al., 2018).

Bloom et al., (2015) also pointed out that the pay-as-you-go system in which young and middle-aged workers save for retired persons is not sustainable in developing countries especially if the proportion of retired persons as compared to the working population is high. This could result to increased expenditures and/or shortfalls in income, hence forcing the government either to increase the contribution rates to the fund or to decrease the benefits to be received by the recipients or to look for other avenues of raising funds (Bloom et al., 2015).

As the population ages all the more, the number and intensity of health care services required in the health care sector increases and with the costs of high-tech equipment and improved treatments however, public health care systems are facing enormous developmental pressure (Kalseth & Halvorsen, 2020).

Policy makers must find ways of providing equity, access and reasonably priced and quality health care to this vulnerable group of people and implement these policies in a way that will not overburden the financial resources available for health care delivery to older adults (Bhatt & Bathija, 2018).

These problems emerged primarily in the sphere of LTC where higher demand for specific services and elderly people's care is observed. According to the OECD (2017), the key issues have emerged how to build coherent concepts and system of financing sustainable care services, and many countries are having difficulty in finding viable solutions and, in fact, means of delivering more long-term care due to increasing demands with an inherent reliance on a mix of public and private and family care services (Mosca et al., 2017).



It should also be noted that modern tendencies and changes in populace behavior do not only affect social welfare systems through financial aspect but also through other societal aspects. In any case, the directing of public funds to the needs of older people can be conflictive with other social calls, such as health, education or the construction of schools or childcare services. The wellbeing of elderly people has to be preserved but at the same time it is necessary to take measures to prevent the overload of young generation by debts in preservation of elderly people's lives (Kirkbride et al., 2024).

Academic works have stressed the need for more complex policy solutions that can adequately cover all relevant aspects of social welfare issues in the context of changes to pension, healthcare financing, and long-term care systems. To sum up, strategy development for the maintenance of the financial and social sustainability of these important systems will require constant research and international cooperation given the challenges presented by demographic changes (ILO, 2018).

Evolving Eldercare Models and the Changing Role of Family Caregiving

Given the increasing proportions of the population aged 65 and over, who require care and support for various reasons, the traditional prescribed social welfare structures have been stretched and there has been renewed focus on the family and family caregivers in particularly for the support of the elderly. Researchers have looked at the changes of the family care structure and the issues that exist touching on the issues of care giving to the elderly mainly because of the change in norms and economic values (Jika, 2021).

Historically, the most important source has been of the family support especially from the adult children in lending support and care to their elderly family members (Kohli & Albertini, 2008). As explained earlier though, the breakdown of the multigenerational model for the living under one roof and growing employment rate of women have changed the dynamics of home-based family care to the elderly. Further it is noted that in recent years, there has been a shift in the utilization of the paid, formal care services in order on the increasing involvement of private sector actors in provision of long-term care (Cohn et al., 2022).

This transition raises questions and fears over loss of what was previously considered as a socially approved provision of care through family wing for the aging generation of elders. According to Bookman and Kimbrel (2011), family caregivers are critical to supporting their elderly family members in various ways, including mobilizing on their behalf, helping them negotiate various formalized care delivery systems, and ensuring that support does not falter. It could be argued that the disappearance of conventional structures may now place more stresses upon formal carers whilst potentially making others more exposed (Bookman & Kimbrel, 2011).

However, there are certain works that portrayed the difficulties and stresses faced by families and



especially women who continue to undertake their roles of caregiving for their elders besides other responsibilities in their workplace. Many caregivers suffer from the physical, financial, and emotional stress that comes with the duties they perform, thus stressing the need to provide for policies and programs that would help these informal providers endure the burden of caregiving (Gordon et al., 2012).

With these dynamics emerging, there have been calls for new forms of eldercare delivery that can effectively combine the professional services that can be procured from the market and the familial support that can be tapped from the social structure. These include a) protecting and promoting of “aging in place” advocacy that encourages the elderly give up on nursing homes and helped to stay in homes and communities where they wish with support from family, communities as well as professional caregiver services. Another set of approaches has been the establishing of caregiver support programs, the respite services, and the implementation of policies in workplaces that have also been deemed vital to the continued support of the families in eldercare (Satariano et al., 2014).

In the end, it remains important to remember that developments in eldercare are the delicate interrelation between demography, culture, finance, and the personal desire of individuals getting older. Continued research and policy advancements will be vital for measuring the extent to which eldercare models being practiced across the world meets the needs of the elderly and their families while enhancing the capabilities of the families and communities faced with elder care responsibilities.

Technological Innovations and the “Silver Economy”

It has also led to the increase in the pace of technological advancements and the creation of an emerging ‘silver market’ with products and services for older populations. Researchers have employed analysis on the possible impact of distinct technologies in the improvement of the quality of life, of the possibility of ageing individuals, and of their carers.

Exploring the impact of the roles of assistive technologies including smart home devices, wearable sensors, and telehealth applications is also of great interest in regards to the ability of the aging adults to age safely at home, and for as long as possible, independently. Thus, these technologies can promote the monitoring of the health condition of related older adults, help identify possible problems during the initial stage, and allow the related older adults to receive healthcare services away from hospitals and clinics in a short period of time. These innovations have been described in the literature as having the capacity to augment comply, decrease the expenses relating to healthcare, and increase the well-being of elderly citizens Facchinetti et al., 2023).

Similarly, along with the better health condition of older adults and their perception as an economic force, the private sector has been paying much attention to that segment. The term ‘silver economy’ captures the area of products, services, and solutions developed specifically to meet the needs of a



growing population group. This applies to such areas as housing and mobility, as well as leisure and entertainment, financial and technology including healthcare (Altimari & Melia, 2022).

Studies have tried to identify and analyze the common and customer-specific variables with a specific focus on older adult consumers' behaviors, preferences, and purchasing capacity. According to Kohlbacher and Herstatt (2016), in the context of the silver economy, business s and entrepreneurs 'cannot look at elderly people or senior citizens as a homogeneity-oriented, unified catalog of characteristics,' as they are highly diverse. Ideas that are different pertaining to older persons should therefore be collaboratively initiated and developed and should therefore be 'user lead'; another strategy should therefore encompass technology that makes products better for these old persons (Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2008).

At the same time, it has been revealed that the trends of silver economy may lead to increased segmentation and increased "lock-in" effect that can deepen the social disparities among elderly citizens. National and international policymakers and researchers have paid attention to the aspects that point out that technological advancements and the silver economy should be accessible to all the older adults including those who are most vulnerable (Klimczuk, 2021).

Thus, the impact of future technological expansion on the integration of silver economy, and the changes in the demographics and requirements of the elderly population accordingly, will remain a focus of research. Further studies, as well as future collaboration with various sectors, will remain vital in ensuring the benefits offered by such developments for enabling well-being of the aging population.

Implications for Urban Planning and the Built Environment

The low population density distribution patterns coupled with population aging is a major concern when it comes to the creation of the built environment, especially in the urban areas. Researchers have explored how the psychosocial necessities and/or desires of elderly persons should be incorporated into social and physical environments by focusing on the discipline of urban studies and architecture.

Among them there is public availability and accessibility to work, goods and services and the possibilities to maneuver in the urban environment. Other scholars have pointed out the need for proper accessibility of infrastructure in the surrounding environment which is inclusive of sidewalks, crosswalks together with quality, reliable and accessible public transportation that ensures that elderly is able to move in their societies safely without assistance. Taking account of the particulars of such design principles (also known as the principles of universal design, which seek to ensure environments where all individuals, regardless of age and disabilities, can easily navigate) has been a vital component of these efforts (Tiznado et al., 2018).

Other than transportation, researchers have also focused on housing as one important area that



facilitates aging-in-place among the elderly. This range from the kind of housing, single story living, wider doors opening, door and hallways, and including the use of assistive technology. Opportunities to have a range of housing types, including those where older people could live with their families and relatives, and the development of supportive housing for the elderly can also guarantee that the latter can find the necessary housing simply, quickly, and inexpensively (Huduser, 2017).

Another major focus in policies and strategies for age-friendly cities relates to the wider physical environment, particularly public open spaces and other communal facilities. Scholars have stressed the need to design any open area like park, community center or any culture hub for a group of people such as the elderly because they have social, physical and mental. Age-friendly considerations like provision of seats, shades, clear marks on the floor, and signs that can easily be read by the elderly should be provided to improve the accessibility of such areas to the elderly (Buffel et al., 2012).

The following are some of the potential advantages of intergenerational design strategies for built environments that promote social interactions and ageing: As asserted by Kaplan et al., (2007), the centrality of place, with an understanding of Intergenerational design as helping to create such territories. Perhaps measures like these can go a long way in fighting loneliness and improving elderly people's sense of belonging, as well as preventing the marginalization and focusing only on elderly folks rather than ageing population as a whole (Kaplan et al., 2007).

However, the attempts to put in the age-friendly urban planning strategies have been encountering certain difficulties, such as other and possibly more pressing municipal activities, lack of adequate financial resources, and challenges that come with changing the architecture of existing space. It's within these constraints advancing ageing populations and their representatives, such as the aging organization and other such groups, must engage with policymakers and urban planners, to ensure that the development of cities and communities is amicable to ageing populations.

Given a growing number of elderly people living in urban territories, age-adaptive strategies and their implementation into planning and construction of cities will remain a significant topic of discussion and investigation. Interdisciplinary cooperation and efforts in incorporating the ideas of older people in the development of environment will remain effective to facilitate new age friendly places for people in society.

Case Study 1: This part analyze Japan's approach to aging as a multifaceted strategy that involves a combination of social policies and more focused interventions.

Japan has long been ahead of other developed countries in addressing the phenomenon of population aging as it has gone through a process of demographical transition faster than many countries. The Japanese government has implemented a multifaceted strategy to address the needs of its aging population, including:



- Enacting a new long-term care insurance program that offers support services to elderly consumers, who may require home care or community assistance, or reside in nursing homes.
- Supporting the implementation of age-friendly urban environment development strategies, programs, and activities such as establishing the 'livable villages', efficient public transport systems, shared public areas or facilities for elderly and children.
- Intending mainly the technological advancement on how elderly people could stay longer at home, they include smart homes, health technology and home helper robots.
- Policies that could be adopted in this concept include; extending the years of service hence encouraging older adults to embrace labour force participation results; offering retraining programs.
- Encouraging intergenerational interaction and eradicating isolation through various curriculum that help young and old connect.

The best example of such an effort has been evident in Japan this paper affirms that the Japanese strategies has been very instrumental as other countries struggle to deal with rapid population aging.

Case Study 2: The Singaporean approach to eldercare has been adaptive, for example they handle healthcare in a manner that is unique and distinct from other developed countries.

Singapore is using a very dynamic approach to implement strategies that would suit the elderly well. Key elements of Singapore's approach include:

- These options will be a combination of facilities that are governmental and private as well as those offered through public community initiatives to ensure a comprehensive care spectrum.
- Reimbursement for families to take on caregiving roles, along with providing respite care, and offering education programs as well.
- The best practice that demonstrates service innovation and elements of medical premium care is the creation of "senior-friendly" public housing that incorporates healthcare and social services within residential communities.
- Promoting volunteerism and hiring the aged, supporting programs for education and leisure that will enhance aged people's quality of life.
- The accessibility of institution-based care, public policies and regulation to encourage the advance of the silver economy and technological solutions in eldercare.

Learning culture has been an important factor which enabled Singapore to meet new requirements based on the ageing population and strengthen the key stakeholders.

Case Study 3: Prevalent health concerns in Germany entail preventing and managing diseases while promoting rehabilitative care.

Of the seven indicators of population aging policies, Germany has especially stressed proactive measures and rehabilitation services. Key aspects of the German model include

- Lifespan wellness: health promotion and disease prevention interventions, aimed at assisting elderly people to make changes in their behaviors that will enhance their well-being and facilitate the practice of physical activity routinely, are outlined.
- This includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and any other shifted that will



allow the elderly to reach back and sustain their functionality.

- The provision and advancement of geriatric care into different healthcare facilities, particularly the right and appropriate care for the elder patients.
- Statistical barring of older workers as well as factors that encourage the continued employment of older employee, which include; flexible working schedule/ arrangements, and policies against discrimination of the elderly employees.
- Awareness and support for their initiatives that mainly seek to facilitate the advancement of age friendly urban development and modification of existing public structures to accommodate older people.

Germany's efforts in recent years have been toward the preventive and rehabilitative aspects in order to enhance the level of independency and quality of life of elderly people with better management of additional healthcare resources.

These are described below, and the following case studies explicate the various strategies adopted by countries for handling the threat and prospects of population aging. Learning from success stories of other countries, one can develop less leaky and more efficient approaches that can help support aging population within a given nation.

At present, the global population is graying particularly in the developed countries, and this has been posing real sociological challenges that should be tackled both by policy makers and institutions. As care for the elderly becomes an issue of increasing concern due to aging populations and the demands they make for the reconfiguration of households and inter-generational relationships, there is a shift away from the multi- generational household model. This has made the elderly to feel more abandoned and lonely due to lack of support from their families, and the governments social welfare services that offer pensions, health care and other retirement services to the elderly as they live longer years.

The goal is to ensure that any reforms and changes are made that involve these programs and their financial and social sustainability if based on clear policies and cooperative relations on the international level. Furthermore, the shift in the responsibilities of the family carers will lead to the development of new paradigms of eldercare to meet the elderly's needs and demands while reflecting on the modern understanding of the family value. In conclusion, sociological effects of aging people give rise to numerous questions that are quite intricate and warrant innovative approaches towards better lives of the elderly as well as the perception of the effects undergone by society as a whole. The best efforts would always maintain a focus on pursuing further research and integration as developed countries confront these demographic changes in the future.

Conclusion

The aging of populations, particularly in developed nations, represents a profound demographic transition with far-reaching social, economic, and political implications. As low birth rates coupled



with increased life expectancy have reshaped the age pyramids of these societies, policymakers and social institutions must grapple with a complex set of challenges.

The sociological impacts of this shift are multifaceted, altering lifestyles, family structures, welfare systems, workforce dynamics, consumption patterns, and the cohesiveness of communities. Governments and social service providers will need to adapt to evolving demands on healthcare, retirement programs, and social support networks. The economic ramifications, from workforce shortages to shifts in consumption, also require strategic planning and innovation.

Compounding these issues is the parallel trend of globalization, which has accelerated the growth and integration of business activities across borders. The interplay between aging populations and global economic forces presents an additional layer of complexity that policymakers must navigate. While the scale and pace of these demographic changes pose significant risks, they also present opportunities. Proactive, multifaceted policy responses can help mitigate negative outcomes and harness the potential of aging populations. Investing in healthy aging initiatives, designing flexible social safety nets, and fostering innovation in eldercare and labor markets are all critical components of an effective policy approach. As developed nations continue to grapple with this demographic transition, the insights gleaned from this research can inform decision-making and help guide the development of holistic strategies to ensure the well-being of aging populations while supporting broader social and economic progress.



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