

Uzma Ashiq*
Amir Zada Asad**

THE RISING OLD AGE PROBLEM IN PAKISTAN

Abstract

Not only world aged population is on rise, the aged population in Pakistan is also on rise since the onslaught of demographic transition during the early 1990s. This situation has posed many problems not only for the aged themselves but for the relatives and families as well due to the changing socio-economic orders. Old age is a natural phenomenon and every living organism has to undergo the process that converges on a series of problems ranging from physical health to economic poverty and loss of social status. Gone are the days when children and youngsters were socially responsible for the upkeep of the elders. Now in poor countries like Pakistan, this responsibility has to be shouldered by the states due to changing cultural conditions and the dwindling grip of religion. This literature based article points out to the growing problem of aging and ageism for which the policy makers have to think promptly before the problem grows exponentially.

Key Word: Old age, Old-age problems, Loss of status, Poverty, Physical Health Problems, Social safety nets.

Introduction

According to United nation population fund report of 2012, this second decade of the century shall witness about one billion people over the age of 60 years. According to the UN estimates by the year 2025, the 60+ population will grow to 1.2 billion and by 2050, the planet will have 2.5 billion age people. Almost two third of the elderly people are living in developing countries. Among them, very old (80+ years of age) people have become the fastest growing population. These are not only statistics which can be ignored. Old age is not only a problem itself but also have serious socio-economic implications for the societies. Sociologist gives four reasons for why old age is deadly. Firstly, it withdraws us from active employment; secondly, it enfeebles the body, thirdly it deprives us of nearly all physical pleasures, and fourthly it is the next step to death. Perhaps, two more could be added to his list, i.e. economic insecurity and loneliness. But in objective terms, economic, social, physical and psychological problems are associated with old age.

* Uzma Ashiq ,Lecturer, Department of Social Work,University of Sargodha (e-mail: uzma@uos.edu.pk)

** Amir Zada Asad , Professor, Department of Social Work University of Peshawar (e-mail: amir_zada_asad@yahoo.co.uk)

Aging can be defined in at least three aspects other than chronological age. These aspects are biological, psychological, and social. Chronological age is the time passed since the birth of a person's in years and is the most common determinant of age and aging (Birren & Schroots, 1995; p.3).

Gerontologists differentiated between normal ageing from three prospects:

“biological age, encompassing the study of changes in various bodily systems and how these changes affect the physical, psychological, and social functioning of older adults; psychological age, the person's ability to adapt to and modify familiar and unfamiliar environments, including an individual's sensory and mental capacities as well as his or her adaptive capacity and personality; and social age, a person's position or role in a given social structure, where age-based assigned roles specify an individual's rights and responsibilities, as well as his or her ability to relate to and connect with others, and accounts for the older adults' functionality in a social context (Birren:1969)”.

The problem

Pakistan as a developing country is passing through many challenges, among them, the process of a demographic transition is the most thriving one. The major concern is the ratio of aged people with respect to the total population which is rising day by day. According to 1998 Census report, in Pakistan the population of over-60 years increased to 7.34 million which was recorded as 2.92 million in 1961(Birren, 1969; p. 101, GoP, 1999). This indicated a three times increase in the aged population over 3.5 decades. It was further reported that by the year 2030, it would be increased to 23.76 million. This shows the increment in the share of the elderly in total population 9.3 percent by the year 2030.

Table 1. Pakistan: Old Population (millions)

<i>Census year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>1961</i>	<i>1.68</i>	<i>1.24</i>	<i>2.92</i>
<i>1972</i>	<i>2.63</i>	<i>1.94</i>	<i>4.57</i>
<i>1981</i>	<i>3.40</i>	<i>2.48</i>	<i>5.88</i>
<i>1998</i>	<i>3.99</i>	<i>3.35</i>	<i>7.34</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>5.69</i>	<i>5.50</i>	<i>11.19</i>
<i>2030</i>	<i>11.09</i>	<i>11.09</i>	<i>22.07</i>

Having a look at different censuses of the population of Pakistan, it shows that the total population of age 60+ in Pakistan, according to the first census of population of 1961, was 2.92%. By the second census the total raised to 4.57%. By 1981 census we had the % age of the aged population was 5.88% of the total and by 1998, in a total population of over 129 million, the aged population (by aged population, we mean the people aged 60+ as in Pakistan the retirement age or the age of superannuation is 60 years) were over seven million.

Comparing the two censuses of 1998 and 1961, it can be observed that the population 60 year and above increased by 4.42 million in twenty years indicating

a300% increase of this age group population. It is estimated that another jump will happen between 1998 and 2013 and the population of the aged in Pakistan will grow from 7.34 million to 11.19 million (an increase of 3.85 million in fifteen years). This number is more than the population of the biggest industrial city of Karachi. By 2030 or the future fifteen years, this population will grow to 23.76 million; in other words, this means the ratio of the aged population of Pakistan shall increase from around 6% to 9.3% during the duration between 2006 and 2030.

Table 2: Old aged Population in Pakistan by Province

<i>Province</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Total Share%</i>	<i>Old Population</i>	<i>Old Share %</i>	<i>Proportion %</i>
<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>129,169,894</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>7,159,893</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>5.54</i>
<i>Punjab</i>	<i>73621290</i>	<i>57.00</i>	<i>456,9796</i>	<i>63.82</i>	<i>6.21</i>
<i>Sindh</i>	<i>304,39,893</i>	<i>23.57</i>	<i>140,2,597</i>	<i>19.59</i>	<i>4.61</i>
<i>KPK(NWFP)</i>	<i>177,37,591</i>	<i>13.73</i>	<i>868,665</i>	<i>12.13</i>	<i>4.90</i>
<i>Baluchistan</i>	<i>65,65, 885</i>	<i>5.08</i>	<i>282,191</i>	<i>3.94</i>	<i>4.30</i>
<i>Islamabad (FCA)</i>	<i>805,235</i>	<i>0.62</i>	<i>36,544</i>	<i>0.51</i>	<i>4.54</i>

Source: Pakistan Census report, 1998.

Pakistan’s Director General Baitul-Mal Mr. Zammurud Khan in an address (1994) to a consultative meeting on the proposed bill for the senior citizens in the Capital Territory Area of Islamabad who said that;

“According to UNFPA and Help Age International reports, Pakistan is one of the 15 countries where population of over-60 years is more than 10 million”. At present Pakistan has 11.3 million people over the age of 60 years which will increase to 43.3 million in 2050,that will be approximately 15.8 percent of the population (Time Value Property;2012)” .

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Pakistan (2000-2020)

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2020</i>
Population (thousands)	142,654	161,151	181,753	204,465	227,395
Male population (thousands)	73,104	82,444	92,898	104,555	116,274
Female population (000)	69551	78,707	88,855	99,910	111,112
Population sex ratio (males per 100 females)	105.1	104.7	104.6	104.6	104.6
Percentage aged 0-4	15.6	15.2	14.7	13.8	12.7
Percentage aged 5-14	26.4	25.6	24.8	24.3	23.6
Percentage aged 15-24	19.3	20.1	20.3	19.8	19.6

Percentage aged 60 or over	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.8
Percentage aged 65 or over	3.6	3.8	3.8	4.0	4.0
Percentage aged 80 or over	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
Percentage of women aged	46.6	47.6	48.4	49.3	50.5
Median age (years)	18.8	19.2	19.9	20.8	21.8
Population density (per sq. Km)	179	202	228	257	286

According to the above table there is a gradual increase in the percentages of the age 60 and above up to 2020. The assumption of population ageing in Pakistan is unsupported from the projection for year 2005 onwards. Therefore the problems of the old age population in Pakistan are the result of their numbers instead of their ageing factor.

Pakistan is facing the population transition as all other developing countries (Ibid). In near future Pakistan will have to face this situation. The value systems which once dominated in our society are diminishing due to industrialization and shrinking family structures. Therefore the aged are posed as dependent and problematic for the caretakers. Both the government and private sectors have ignored this field to the extreme. In order to cater the socioeconomic requirements of the aged population of Pakistan, a complete enumeration of the senior citizens, the trends and needs in the future be taken care of accordingly. This shall open doors in this field from new dimensions.

Since Pakistan is an Islamic society, the impact of religion permeates to the lives of all the people. It is a family obligation to look after the elderly parents and relatives. It is the cultural as well as a religious duty of the children to look after the aged parents properly. Most aged parents live with children, though may be poor. Recently the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), a watchdog body to look into the laws of the state whether they are in accordance with the Islamic principles or not, has given its verdict against the establishment of such welfare homes. This means in an Islamic society, it is the sacred responsibility of the children to look after their parents in old age as the holy Quran has commanded. For those who have no source of support, the state should act as supporter and establish such homes, as per verdict of the CII.

There are some institutions in the private sector, which look after these deserted or neglected aged people on a voluntary basis. However, the problem is still unaddressed at government level. One of the main problems of the aged people in Pakistan may not be that they're unloved by the younger generation, but rather their poverty both in urban and rural areas. Given their age, they're unable to work and even if they do have a meager state pension it is not enough to maintain a human life. Hence, they are considered to be a burden on their children and family members. There are also health care disadvantages as there are no proper arrangements for the elderly in public institutions. Keeping in view their age and the health issues that come along with it there are no special arrangements of toilets, baths, pavement or movement of these people. Consequently, they feel isolated, dejected and rejected.

It is reported officially through the Pakistan Demographic and House hold Survey 2001 that actual population of the aged people in the year 2,000 was over eight million and the dependency ratio of these aged people in the working population was nearly eleven percent. The projected burden is alarming and will be about 20% by 2015 (Pakistan Demographic & Household Survey, 2001). The highest indicated growth in size of 75 years and above, especially the women, is shown in this table. In the light of existing health services and long-term care facilities, these changes may have influential supply-demand implications.

Table 4: Pakistan’s Annual meanincrease of old-age Population from 2000 – 2050

Age Groups	2000 – 2020		2020 – 2050	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
60—64	3.20	3.13	3.28	3.26
65-74	3.09	2.96	3.29	3.33
75+	3.58	4.21	3.77	4.22
Total Pop.	2.35	2.37	1.79	1.82

Source: UN (2002 Revision)¹

In light of these population transitions, some steps are taken by experts in Pakistan to handle the problems and to provide the required mechanism both by the state and the non-state actors to improve the social safety nets for the aged(Afzal, 1994).Apparently Pakistan has very few schemes regarding social security apart from a small proportion of the labor force constituting of the civil servants, military forces. Ageing in Pakistan is turning to be weirder with the passage of time due to weak state responses and unsustainable belief about filial support. This has specifically surfaced from the field-based study conducted by Clark et al. (2002) which was made to test the presuppositions about family support for the aged. The study unveils substantial rusting of past values where the multi-centric survey shows that the province of Punjab is covering 938 elderly men and women—leaving a large sum of older persons staggering. And even a birds’ eye view of these details heightens apprehensions of increasing unsecured ageing and limited family support to the elderly.

¹ Downloaded from:)<http://www.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=13888389021081132-fm13>

Since the demographic transition of the 1990s (Sathar & Casterlin, 1998), Pakistan is expected to continue to the old age phenomenon at a constantly increasing rate and will face a series of serious problems. To stop this situation steps should be taken now. Ageing of population has many overwhelming social and economic implications in Pakistan, affecting all type of social relationships, health care, education, social security, social policies and even the stability of a family as an institution.

Problems associated with old age

This can be understood that aging is psycho-physical and social process that causes changes in a in the functional capabilities and that influence social definition (Atchley, 1988). Aging brings in its wake a number of problems not only for the aged themselves in all spheres of life but also for the whole society. For an elderly person loss of employment means not only exposure to financial instability, but also reduction in status. Similarly, loss of a spouse may lead to loss of home and prestige once enjoyed as head of the household. Sociologists have enumerated four reasons for why old age is deadly. Firstly, it withdraws us from active employment; secondly, it enfeebles the body, thirdly it deprives us of nearly all physical pleasures, and fourthly it is the next step to death. Perhaps, two more could be added to the list, i.e. economic insecurity and loneliness. But in objective terms, economic, social, physical and psychological problems are associated with old age.

The lowering Social Status of Elderly people

Not only economic problems are faced by the aged people, the worst of these problems is the recognition of their social status. In the western folk vernacular it is said, “the only good thing you can say about old age is that it is better than being dead (Ibid)”. The psychological problems faced by the elderly are numerous. They have to make an adjustment with the new social, economic and physical conditions. They must get used to depend upon others and accept the age, status they are assigned. They must adjust with role-loss, isolation and loss of prestige.

Problems of Families with elderly people

To meet all sort of needs older persons are dependent on individual social support system consisting of multiple networks like family, relatives, friends and neighbors because like all other traditional societies, care of the aged in Pakistan is the responsibility of the families. But this can materialize only if families have reasonable income resources (Afzal, 2006). The centuries old strong joint and extended family system is now replaced by the nuclear family system, which is comparatively weak both politically and economically creating day-to-day problems for the aged members (Syed et al., 2003).

New economic orders compel families to focus more on amenities than the aged people. Even then, many if not majority of the older persons, are not helped by their families to fulfill their immediate requirements and facing hardships like less respect, no care, no attention, sickness and physical mal-treatment (Afzal, 1999) and violence against them. A highly common abusive practice is in the form of financial exploitation, depriving the elderly of their resources and income, misusing it, or obtaining it by force and coercion for personal profit and gains,

thus encroaching on one of their basic rights. All these acts are domestic violence referring to all forms of mistreatment of an aged person by anyone having a blood (Sijuwade, 1995).

Aging, Poverty and social safety nets in Pakistan

Pakistan is a country where 74% people earn less than US\$ 2 a day (Population Reference Bureau, 2006). Life expectancy at birth is still 63 years for males and 65 for females (Human Development Report, 2004). The social sector expenditures in Pakistan are dismal because of the expenditures as %age of GDP is 0.5 on social protection, 0.1% on social insurance, 0.2 on social assistance (Social Protection Strategy, 2006). The inflation rate, according to independent observers stands at 8% (The News International, 26 Sep 2006). Under these dismal economic conditions, little is left for social welfare, particularly for the welfare of the aged who are the poorest in the country with little or no economic resources. The process of aging is expected to become faster and this shall consequently enhance the old-age dependency ratio to a great extent. Social security schemes and pension are offered to the currently serving and retired and retired private sector workforce but they only manage to cover a rather small part of the aged population in the private sector.

Pakistan has some sporadic welfare nets as well. There is an old-age pension system for about 0.85 million employees on retirement out of a total aged people of over seven million. There is the Employees Social Security Institution, providing insurance against death, disability. As a result of this situation the social problem of begging, crimes, illiteracy, ill-health etc. haunt most of the Pakistanis. Pakistan is confronted with the politics of poverty and the poverty of politics. As a result, there is a gloomy situation for social protection of the masses particularly the aged poor. According to some authentic reports, there is an indication that at least one out of every four Pakistanis is invariably poor and that one in every two Pakistanis may be vulnerable to becoming poor in the immediate future. Another recently conducted assessment of vulnerability by the World Bank reported that 56.2 % of the total population in Pakistan faces a more than 50% chance of falling into poverty in the upcoming few years...Pakistan has no overreaching social protection strategy. The existing programmes for the provision of social protection have also clearly been shown to be highly inadequate in the terms of coverage of poor and vulnerable households as well as in terms of the types and levels of support provided by them (World Bank and Gallop, 2006).

Recent trends show a rise in poverty in Pakistan posing a new wave of challenges, which are very likely to negatively influence the elderly population of the country currently living with little or no economic and social support. According to recent estimates, it is indicated that 33% of the population are living on or below the poverty line. Not only will the older people's quality of life be affected with the advancement in age and the increase of poverty in Pakistan but it will also cause a decrease in the economically active portion of the total population, thus highlighting the need for provision of adequate and proper safety nets. Researches indicate that dependency ratio is expected to steadily increase in Pakistan with a value of 6.7 in the year 2000, then increasing to 7.9 by the year 2025, and a staggering 12.1 by 2050 (UNO, 2002).

A vastly large number of the total workforce in Pakistan is employed in a loose and informal economy, and so a high majority of the senior population is completely lacking any cover of pension or other type of social security scheme (Afzal, 1997). The elderly, and especially the female elderly, are highly prone to being exposed to the harsh conditions with the increase in poverty. In fact, such situation is going to prevail in Pakistan, as the female life expectancy has surpassed the males' life expectancy in recent years (Pakistan Economic survey, 2002; p.210). A small portion of the old-age population is covered by some form of social security schemes available in the public as well as private sectors, but an overwhelmingly large portion of the senior population working or retired from the informal sector of the economy remains unprotected as they do not fall under any such social security schemes. This challenge of catering to the needs and coping with the demands of a rapidly increasing elderly population requires substantial improvements in the support base and systems of social security in Pakistan. Estimates indicate that the needs of mere 20 percent of the total elderly population are catered by the Pay and Pension Scheme. Whereas, necessary coverage to a population of 7.34 million elderly citizens (as reported in 1998) is expected to cost approximately 88 billion rupees, provided that 1000 rupees are given as monthly benefits to each individual.

Conclusion

This work is about the growing problem of old-age, the problems of the aged people and about the state level services for them. The problem is growing, but the state has not yet devised any policy for their welfare. Some sporadic work in the shape of welfare homes for the aged in the province of Punjab and Sind have been established, but the intake of the elderly in these homes shows a different attitude of the public and the services are underutilized because of cultural and religious reasons. The main problems that aged face in our society are; their poverty, the abuse of the elderly people within families, lack of state sponsored social security, and health problems.

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