

Gerontology vs Economic Growth with a Focus on Asia: A Sociological Appraisal

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Abstract

Sociology generally monitors population and evaluates its change from birth to death. The changes happening in population is followed in gerontology. Gerontology is not much known within social sciences. Economic growth usually leads to higher standard of living which includes longer life for many people. Though longevity first started in Western world, yet it gradually entered Asia since mid20th century. Currently, many Asian countries are facing aging cohorts, but many of them are not well experienced to plan and manage their elderly people. So, many Asian aging people have to economically depend on their children or grandchildren. Asian countries which are population-wise growing, need to take better and constructive steps toward their elderly people. Gerontologic ally speaking, many Asian countries will have more aging people in the decades to come due to lower fertility rates within their current young families. Decline of Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has highly contributed to aging boost in Asia.

Keywords: Sociology; Gerontology; Economic growth; Aging; Longevity

Introduction

Population aging is usually known as the inclusive aspects of gerontology. Gerontology includes all social, psychological, and ... aspects of aging (Harris, 1988). Sociologically speaking, gerontology is reflected in

nursing, psychology, psychiatry, public health etc. According to life course theory, aging happens throughout life from birth to death [1]. Aging mainly represents the accumulation of changes in a human being over time [2], and can encompass physical, psychological and social changes. Aging has become very common during the 20th century. Science and technology have highly contributed to longevity. Increasing mid age and decrease in fertility have also contributed to aging initially in the Western world, followed by its commencement in the developing world. Worldwide about 9% of population is estimated elderly people [3]. Currently, the ratio of aging people is on increase. Sociology appraises aging as a complicated issue. That is to say, many people get aged in developing world without any social security at their old age.

Economic growth, which in itself leads to development, also affects the population in various ways; That is, a movement in which population growth, middle age, population aging, population health, and so on are affected. Over the last two centuries, economic growth has generally affected the developed countries of Western Europe; In other words, population growth has decreased in those communities, and as a result, a smaller population has emerged in these communities. Such a situation has affected the lives of citizens in those communities in various ways, economically and socially, and the quality of life; That is, a phenomenon that itself affected other demographic indicators such as life expectancy, reduction of mortality, etc. in those communities first and foremost in other parts of the world. Also, the middle age index increases widely under the influence of economic growth. The middle age index

refers to the point at which 50% of the population is at that age. For example, today in industrialized countries the median age index is over 32 years old. In non-industrial societies, however, the median age index is generally below the age of 20. Population aging, as one of the achievements of economic growth, first occurred in industrialized countries and gradually spread to other societies to some extent. Also, economic growth has led to better health of the population in different age groups. Hence, economic growth generally affects other social and demographic indicators to a large extent. The Asian region or continental Asia has also undergone extensive changes in the years since 1950, as far as aging and economic growth are concerned. This means that the demographic events of industrial societies have gradually affected Asian societies since the mid-twentieth century.

Most of the changes due to economic growth and demographic change are related to East Asian countries. In the words of Indian Population Minister Karan Singh at the 1974 Bucharest Population Conference, "development is the best means of prevention." This means that when countries pursue economic development, they naturally and regularly modify their population growth, or in other words, following the economic development of the population, it also modifies in various forms. Improving the life expectancy of the population, middle age of the population, reduction of population mortality and the like are among the things that are achieved under the influence of economic growth. The process or economic growth first happened to Japan, South Korea, China and many other countries. In such a situation, demographic planners in the long run must consider the needs of the population. This means that in the context of increasing life expectancy, for example up to the age of 80, the planning process in a country must anticipate the food, health, housing, employment, etc. needs of the population up to the age of 80 or older. Fertility decline, as a determinant of population, also occurs naturally following economic growth; That is, a situation in which many of the people involved in economic growth at an older age marry and subsequently have children. This situation is also evident in many Asian societies today.

Method of Research

Methodology used in the present article is of qualitative type. In that, various paradigms have been used to find out about the facts regarding pandemics during the history. Qualitative research usually studies people, events or areas in their natural settings. In finding facts for the research, the researcher engaged in careful data collection and thoughtful analysis of what was relevant. In the documentary research applied for the present research, printed and written materials were widely regarded. The research was performed as a qualitative library-type in which the researcher had to refer to the relevant and related sources. In the current research, various documents were thoroughly investigated, and the needful inferences were made. The data fed by the investigator in the present article is hopefully reliable. Though literature on pandemics is very limited, yet the author tried to investigate many different resources in order to elicit the necessary information to build up the text.

Contradiction of economic growth and population

Asian countries face two strategic challenges. Such countries, while generally experiencing population growth, cannot pursue their economic growth commensurate with it. The gap between these two growth rates has created contradictions. The result of the gap between economic growth and population growth is declining living standards, rising unemployment, forced migration, food shortages, and many other economic and social ills and deviations in such societies. The relationship between population growth and economic growth itself is a paradoxical phenomenon. It is also argued that low population growth in high-income countries is likely to cause social and economic problems. However, high population growth in low-income countries is likely to slow their development [4]. Hence, the adjustment of the two rates of economic growth and population growth has been emphasized by many economists and economic sociologists. Therefore, the economic growth of their communities must be commensurate with the demographic indicators in the communities in question. While Asia has largely brought these indicators closer together, the African continent today is facing a widening gap between the two indicators; That is, a situation that will create more challenges and problems for the government and the nation in African countries in the coming periods.

While many such countries are experiencing economic growth, their share of the young population is declining; That is, a phenomenon that affects economic growth itself. It is noteworthy that any shortcoming in the process of natural population growth and achieving the level of population replacement, will greatly fail and limit economic progress. In a situation where there is not enough manpower to enter the production sector in the agricultural and industrial sectors, society faces many economic and social challenges and weaknesses. On the contrary, in such circumstances, society moves towards aging. An example of such a situation is the industrialized country of Japan today; That is, a society in which about 27% of the population is aged 65 and over, and in contrast to the index of its young population, which should be responsible for economic cycles, has declined. Therefore, countries must always have proper monitoring of population growth and reproduction in order to keep their economic growth active and continuous. The relationship between population growth and economic productivity growth must always be studied and evaluated [5].

While these are the conditions for economic growth and the share of the labor force, on the other hand, a large share of the labor force in these societies is moving away from their economic and professional responsibilities, and gradually increasing the share of the elderly population in these countries. A clear example of this contradiction is the societies of Western Europe and industrialized countries in general. In such societies, due to the existing infrastructure, a significant proportion of the population creates a new vacuum in the labor market, in the industrial and service sectors, every day by crossing the border of old age and separating from economic and service activities. However, such countries also face the problem of lack of manpower and alternatives; That is,

following the declining trend of the fertility index in recent decades, a smaller population is of working age. The imbalance of age groups and the population of their population leads to a decrease in labor force participation and a decrease in savings, which in turn slows down economic growth (David 2010). In such circumstances, industrialized countries are forced to use migrant manpower in their various industrial and economic sectors; That is, a scenario that brings new problems for such communities. One of the needs of the present age is to monitor the population growth trend and its dependent indicators. This situation has led Japanese industrial societies to recommend and implement incentive policies to increase fertility in 2014; This means that by 2050, the total fertility rate in that country will increase from 1.4 children to 1.8 children per woman during her lifetime. Otherwise, in the coming decades, Japan's industry and economy will face a severe labor shortage.

While the two goals (economic growth and labor force) are in conflict, appropriate policies must be adopted by the countries concerned. Today, economic growth is a priority for many countries, and it has overshadowed the growth of manpower and proper birth; Gradually, over time, labor shortages have emerged in many economies, especially in developed countries. Under such circumstances, governments must adopt effective and forward-looking policies so that their economic growth does not face a shortage of manpower. Today, countries such as Japan in Asia and Germany in the European Union are faced with this issue and the contradiction raised as two examples. While economic growth and revenues in these countries are in good shape, at the same time, the lack of effective manpower has hampered economic movement in such countries. As a result, these countries have recently pursued, and strongly promoted, policies to encourage fertility and increase fertility; Simply because in the coming decades their economic and industrial system will face less manpower shortages. In a situation where such Asian countries must always maintain their strong economic growth, it is necessary to adopt policies that promote savings on the one hand, and investment in human capital on the other.

The East Asian Miracle is largely related to manpower investment in the region. In other words, a kind of educational miracle happened behind the economic miracle [6]. Many developing countries in the Asian region have pursued dual policies; It means a process in which the financial capital and savings of countries increase, and at the same time human capital has a higher quality. Many such countries, such as South Korea, Malaysia, China, and the like, have consistently boosted their investment in manpower and put it on the national planning agenda. This means that by improving the quality of labor, economic production and economic efficiency also had higher quality and wider markets. Therefore, countries today, while their population growth index has decreased, inevitably have to give high priority to their human capital along with their economic growth.

Financial performance

The financial and economic movement and the labor market in the Asian region must be designed in such a way that the

macroeconomy, including income, production, consumption, unemployment, inflation, savings, investment, international trade and the like, is stable. While the population structure of Asian countries has undergone an unprecedented change in recent years, such countries must keep their economic growth current and stable according to these indicators; In such a way that different age groups, including young people, adults and the elderly, according to their needs, enjoy significant well-being and a good quality of life. While some Asian countries have improved such indicators, and in a sustainable way have met the diverse economic and social needs of their population, many other countries in Asia have not provided the necessary infrastructure for their economic development to the desired extent, and thus, they face many weaknesses and economic, social and welfare deficiencies with an emphasis on their elderly population. Therefore, only the elderly can enjoy greater well-being and health in which economic growth in its macro form is always continuous. In this movement, the social, economic and living conditions of the growing elderly population must also be taken into account.

Economic and social infrastructure must be designed and maintained in such a way that the lifestyle of the elderly and growing population is always considered. While the phenomenon of aging is a new experience for developing societies, logistical facilities in these countries must always be paved so that subsequently the growing elderly population in such countries will face fewer challenges. The economic factor, as the most important tool that can provide more guarantees for the elderly, should always be emphasized by the planning system in general. However, industrial societies have generally put this issue on their agenda since the early twentieth century, and as a result, the elderly population in these countries have benefited from the economic development benefits of their societies in old age. Health is one of the most important aspects of life for both people and communities. At the same time, despite the economic recovery of societies over the past half century, people still do not feel better individually and collectively [7].

At the same time, the effects of an aging Asian population on the future economic growth of the region's countries are a matter for reflection. While there is always a significant proportion of the Asian population entering old age, this in itself has many economic implications. For example, as the labor force ages, production declines. Also, the consumer population or per capita consumption index decreases; That is, the process that affects the tax system of countries and such complexities in its economic form can be seen today and in the near future in Asian countries. While such a phenomenon is occurring, economic, social, and demographic planners need to look for new choices, alternatives, and alternatives to alleviate the burden of population aging problems. Likewise, consumption complex and the elderly support system are new phenomena that have not been seen before in societies. Whereas in the not-so-distant past, life expectancy was almost 50% of current life expectancy, in such circumstances the consumption of the elderly population was low. Also, mechanisms and systems for the protection of the elderly have not been much discussed in the past. However, in the 21st century, the consumption of the elderly and

the areas of support for them have emerged as needs; That is, what is appropriate for proper planning and policymaking.

Aging in Asian countries

The aging situation varies between developing countries and also requires policymaking. Following changes in population structure and population policies, declining birth rates, improving health facilities, improving communication networks, literacy and education growth, and overall economic growth in recent decades, the aging population in Asian countries has moved rapidly; Today, many such countries in the Asian region with an aging ratio of more than 10% to about 27% [8] in Japan declare their elderly population ratio. The aging of the population itself has economic effects in various forms; In this way, the elderly, while not participating in economic production, incur relatively high costs. Also, this population will not have such a share in the tax payment system. Hence, the phenomenon of aging as a new experience in Asia has brought new paradoxes and contradictions that need to be identified and solutions. Some countries, such as Japan, have adopted effective policies for decades, and have provided relative support to their elderly. However, less developed Asian countries are generally at the beginning of the road.

While countries with a younger age structure, such as India and the Philippines, enjoy the potential economic benefits of their younger age structure, more older countries (with an older age structure) should also accept immigrant populations by pursuing pro-fertility policies; As the experience of Singapore shows, in this way, many Asian countries have experienced a kind of behavioral dichotomy in terms of domestic indicators. Many of these countries, where the female population has acquired new education and skills, have seen a decline in fertility; In a way, many of these countries have gradually suffered from labor shortages. In the face of demographic changes (declining fertility rates) and improving economic conditions, many such countries have also faced an aging population; It is a phenomenon that needs its own monitoring and planning.

Governments need to strengthen their national pension system, but in a way that does not weaken the incentive to save for old age among individuals. One of the progressive programs of countries today is to create a continuous system through which more security can be created for the aging population. Many pension systems in Asia are poorly planned in the face of rapid aging. While the population shift to aging in Europe and North America took a century, in Asia it takes a generation (thirty years) and it itself needs rapid renewal [9]. Such a plan would ultimately increase life expectancy; That is, a situation in which the growth of the elderly population is increasing more than at any time in the past. At the same time, economic sociologists suggest that the establishment of a pension system should not reduce the incentive to save among the population.

The advice of such economic sociologists is that while strengthening the pension system, individuals directly create savings for their mostly aging period. Such a process will ensure the welfare of the elderly as much as possible in the future. In

any case, the Asian continent, given the increasing trend of its elderly population, in order to prevent the poverty of the elderly population, the relevant governments in different parts of Asia should always put the system of creating a pension on their agenda. At the same time, fixed retirement ages need to change, and greater participation of women as a workforce should be encouraged. In this case, women, as half of the population in any society, can enter into economic and social activities; In a way, by pursuing employment conditions, they can create a more prosperous aging period for themselves in advance. Therefore, by lowering the retirement age, there is a greater opportunity to use the capacities and skills of women. Countries like Japan and many other industrialized countries are in a similar situation. At the same time, in the face of declining fertility and the consequent decline in manpower, women also have more opportunities to enter the labor market. The financial health conditions of most Asian countries, as well as their rapid recovery from the global economic downturn, also pave the way for future challenges. Many Asian countries have been able to escape the negative effects of the 2008 recession in recent years. This in turn has made these countries less exposed to economic-oriented challenges in the coming years.

Change the framework or model

The decline in the total fertility index between 1960 and 2005, together with the increase in life expectancy, has led to a significant change in the age structure of the population in the Asian region. Many Asian countries today, given that their population size has increased significantly compared to the years (before), after 1950, at the same time, the fertility rate in these communities following the change in patterns and infrastructure created in the form of health facilities, Treatment, education and the like have decreased significantly; That is, the process itself has led to an increase in longevity and hope. The relationship between infrastructure and development outcomes is based on the fact that infrastructure both provides services for household consumption and enables the production of key consumables [10,11]. This process has led to an increase in the elderly population in Asian countries today. Asian countries, on the other hand, have generally experienced an unexpected increase in the elderly population without anticipating the economic potential needed by the population. Thus, many developing societies in the Asian region have faced the paradox of aging and economic challenges by changing their fertility framework. It is noteworthy that in the coming years, the volume of the elderly population will increase even more.

The age distribution has also changed from the young population model to the elderly population model; Like what can be seen in Japan today. Such a situation is more or less emerging in China; That is, the population structure is changing in favor of the elderly population in that country. At the same time, such a change in the age structure of the population has economic consequences. In the face of a shortage of manpower of the young population, challenges and shortages of manpower appear in the economic sector. At the same time, and in such a situation that a larger part of the population compared to the young population is in the aging range, it also negatively affects the economy; That is, consuming

less part of the population (elderly population), reducing the share of taxes by this population and the like, has a negative impact on the economy of a society. This paradox can be seen in many developing countries today. The current scenario in the Asian region itself requires further studies, appropriate assessments and investment in terms.

The economic consequences of an aging population depend on how it responds to such a change in age structure. Following the trend of increasing aging, countries should consider the needs of the target population in proportion to the increase in the elderly within its age range. In this case, the elderly population easily enters higher age groups, and during it can meet the needs of their age group. This trend leads to greater well-being for the aging population in terms of gender and age. Otherwise, over time, inexperienced communities will encounter large numbers of different age groups in the elderly population; That is, groups whose economic, social, medical, and other needs are not easily met. Many developing countries are in such a situation today. Women's economic and service participation as a labor force is a response to declining fertility, while in many societies, under the influence of new social, economic and cultural conditions, the fertility process and its rate have declined. With the entry of women into the labor market, the consequences of reduced fertility in active conditions have been largely offset. Industrial societies have used this alternative for years, and perhaps several generations; That is, with the entry of women into the labor market, the shortage of manpower and active population has been compensated. Therefore, other societies in developing countries will sooner or later have to use the pattern of displacement, the use of women in economic and service activities to compensate for the decline in fertility.

Quantitative and qualitative changes in children following reduced fertility have led to improved economic situation, savings, increased life expectancy and improved quality of life. Declining fertility in many developing Asian societies has had a positive effect on economic per capita, income and even savings, and this has led to a new economic cycle. In such a situation, economic transactions, more consumption of goods and services, etc., increase. Demographic change and increasing fertility in one period affect labor supply and demand in subsequent years; That is, it affects the labor market.

While labor is the primary element of crop production, therefore, its demographic changes affect economic growth [12]. Many Asian countries are now experiencing more economic prosperity in recent years as they pursue population policies. Due to the young population and high fertility in some parts of Asia, the aging of the population does not significantly prevent the Asian economic movement in the long run. This means that labor shortages in some parts of Asia are being offset by the migration of labor to economically prosperous and low-fertility areas. At the same time, Asian countries must directly pursue practical and effective demographic policies, otherwise they will face many crises

such as food shortages, water shortages, widespread migration to urban areas, environmental pollution and the like [13,14].

Conclusion

Aging while in need of policymaking, is in different situation in various countries. Due to changes in population structure including decline in birth rates, improving health facilities, improving communication facilities, educational growth, economic growth etc., aging in Asia has grown. Under such conditions, the ratio of aging people in Asia fluctuates between less than 10% and 27% in Japan. The aging people while not having any share in production, they neither pay any taxes in their old age. Hence, the phenomenon of aging in Asia has brought new paradoxes and contradictions that need to be identified and solved. Many pension systems in Asian countries are poorly planned which are not compatible with the present needs of the aging people. Asian countries need to directly pursue practical and effective demographic policies, and if not, they will face crises including food shortage, water shortage, widespread migration to urban areas, environmental pollution and the like.

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