Upcoming picture of ageing population: Pakistan

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Published online: 26 January 2012
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Abstract Ageing of population may have its implications at individual, family, community and economic level. This paper explains how ageing population will behave in the future based on projection assumptions. Future prospects and issues are identified and categorized along with relevance of ageing population trend examined in a survey. The findings demonstrate that ageing population of Pakistan will increase in the forthcoming years. Among several reasons for increase in ageing population, the most important is decline in death rate. The overall sex ratio indicates a better coverage of female in coming decades. For the next 50 years, the life expectancy may rise to 70.7 years. The old age dependency ratio may also increase in the times to come. Married elderly females may be less in number as compared to married elderly males. The high prevalence of other-than-married elderly females deserves special consideration in policy-making and planning. There exists much variation in the literacy rate of both elderly male and female. As the study reflects future pattern of ageing population, its findings may be of interest for researchers and practitioners.

Keywords Projection · Survey · Sex ratio · Life expectancy · Dependency ratio · Literacy rate

1 Introduction

The segment of elderly population is increasing due to improved health facilities especially in the western part of the world. This ageing population brings an economic impact with increased costs pertaining social security and services delivered to the elderly people mostly in European countries (United States 2005). One of the most critical demographic events in the world today is the population ageing (Mohan 2004), the process by which the share of older individuals in the total population starts becoming larger. With rapid decline in mortality and increase in longevity of age, Pakistan as well is likely to face such problems in the...
near future. Ageing of the population has many important socio-economic and demographic implications, and presents challenges for economic activities. Yusuf and Pollard (1981) argue that the variation in age structure would pose little problem if the attitude and behavior of the population did not vary with age. In reality, the changing age structure of populations has significant social and economic implications at the individual, family, community and societal levels (United Nations 2007).

Existing studies in population dynamics concern other factors rather than just age. Amongst the socio-economic–demographic variables are income, household, type of housing unit, tenure type, employment status, car ownership, geographical location, and number of children etc. Past research showed that some of these variables are correlated and care has to be taken in order to not confound various competing influences on environmental budgets (Lenzen 2006).

2 Overview of ageing population

United Nations (1992) has focused upon age-structure of population in the light of increasing proportion of the elderly, fast improvement in health facilities, and declining birth rates. The past research addressed various issues regarding the changing dynamics of the elderly population. For example, Menon and Frontline (2002) described that today’s world is facing a challenge of rapidly ageing population. The increase in life expectancy has added vastly to human happiness and human capabilities across all social groups and cultures. Their study indicated that the consequences of this demographic change in the context of sharpening global inequality are major challenges for the individual families, communities and governments in coming future. In Pakistan, according to UN population projections, the proportion of the elderly population 60 years and above will be 15.1% of the total population by 2050. Hashmi (2003) agreeably concludes that after 2030 the expected rapid increase in elderly population may create a problem by the year 2050 for the country. Hafeez (2004) confirms that the age structure of Pakistan’s population was going to change rapidly due to decline in fertility and continuing improvement in longevity of age. The results showed population of 60 years and over had increased many folds in size and also as a proportion of total population during the next four decades. Men in general were more educated than women as expected in patriarchal society of Pakistan. The studies also concluded the elderly in Pakistan were generally active and participated in routine activities of life including paid jobs and household activities.

In the context of rising median age, Weil (2006) asserts that ageing is particularly high in developed countries with the median age expected to rise up to 45 by 2050. In the setting of Pakistan, a study by Nizam-ud-din (2006) showed that Pakistan’s 60 years or older population had grown from 1.9 million in 1951 and to over 11 million by 2006. According to another study Nizam-ud-din (2006), between now and 2050, the number of older population will rise from 600 million to at most two billion. The United Nations (2007) as well estimated that the number of people 60 years or older in Pakistan will reach around 42 million by 2050. In the same light, Nayab (2008) used the medium variant of UN projection to analyze Pakistan’s changing demography. The total fertility rate (TFR) is expected to continue to fall, reaching a near replacement level by 2050 (Afzal 1977). The share of population bearing working age will touch its peak in 2045 to 68% before starting to decline again, and the reason would be the growing old age population instead of young (Phang 2005). The proportion of the elderly in the total population is projected showed a substantial increase only after 2025 with old dependency ratio likely to show an increasing trend after 2025 (Nayab 2008).