Challenges of Ageing and Development in South Asian Countries

[1]Karunarathne Rasika R A,

Research Scholar, Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Sociology, Mangalore
University, Mangalagangothri, Konaje.
rasike2010@gmail.com
ORCID 0000-0002-5681-2919

[2]Praveena D,

Department of Postgraduate Studies and Research in Political Science,
Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri, Konaje.
praveend7788@gmail.com
ORCID 0009-0002-9710-5572

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Research Paper	This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the socioeconomic and health-related challenges facing ageing populations in South Asian countries, intending to recommend effective policy measures and interventions to support long-term development and improve the quality of life for older persons in the region. Through a desk research strategy relying on secondary data sources, including academic journals, reports from international organizations, government publications, and NGO studies, the study examines demographic trends, healthcare systems, pension plans, and social support structures across South Asia. The findings underscore the urgency of addressing the socioeconomic and healthcare challenges exacerbated by the rising older population in the region. Key contributions from various scholars shed light on critical aspects such as the feminization of ageing, the impact on labour force dynamics, and the potential for harnessing the demographic dividend. Analyses of pension systems, healthcare infrastructure, and social security frameworks highlight the need for robust policy interventions to ensure the well-being and inclusion of
Keywords : *South Asia, ageing population, socioeconomic challenges, health-related difficulties, policy measures, intervention strategies.*	

ageing populations. Moreover, the research emphasizes the importance of tailored approaches to address the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of older individuals across different socio-economic contexts within South Asia. The study concludes with several key recommendations to address the multifaceted challenges highlighted, including the establishment of robust longitudinal research initiatives, policy evaluation, and reform, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, prioritizing community-centered approaches, investing in capacity-building initiatives, encouraging international collaboration, and advocating for policy reforms.

Introduction

Ageing is an inherent and continuous journey involving every living entity. It's a progression that commences at conception and concludes with mortality. Hence, ageing isn't confined to the elderly or those in their golden years; it's a shared experience encompassing infants, children, adolescents, young adults, and the seasoned. Srivastava (1994) highlighted that ageing is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and physical factors, alongside genetic traits specific to each individual and species. Furthermore, ageing holds three interconnected dimensions: biological, psychological, and social (Behura & Moanty, 2005). The population of individuals aged 60 years and older is steadily growing both in number and proportion. In 2019, this demographic accounted for 1 billion people worldwide. By 2030, it is projected to rise to 1.4 billion; by 2050, it will reach 2.1 billion. This surge is unprecedented and is set to accelerate notably in the forthcoming decades, particularly in developing nations ("Ageing," n.d.).

Across the globe, longevity is on the rise, with most individuals now anticipating a life stretching into their sixties and beyond. This demographic trend is universal, manifesting in both the numerical expansion and the greater proportion of elderly individuals within populations worldwide. Projections indicate that by 2030, approximately one out of every six individuals globally will be 60 years old or older. Over this period, the demographic composition will witness a notable shift, with the population of those aged 60 years and older increasing from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion. Looking further ahead, by 2050, the global population of individuals aged 60 years and above will double, reaching 2.1 billion.

Notably, the segment of those aged 80 years or older is anticipated to triple by 2050 compared to 2020, reaching a staggering 426 million individuals (World Health Organization, 2022).

The elderly population of a country can either be a blessing or a burden (Mason & Lee, 2022). The Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2022) showed that by 2030, the Asian continent would be the region with the largest elderly population in the world, exceeding 4.9 billion. With the advancement in technology, extended healthcare services, and accessibility to high levels of assisted care facilities, the aged population can impact the economy in varying magnitudes and hence, is worth analyzing (Jayawardhana et al. 2023). By the year 2030, it is projected that the global ageing population, particularly in Asia, will constitute at least 30% of the total population (Deloitte, 2021). While this percentage might appear less striking at first glance, a broader perspective reveals significant economic concerns and challenges that demand attention. A key focus of analysis for the Asian economy is the notable surge observed post-2003, with countries like India, Singapore, Indonesia, China, and Taiwan leading the way in economic expansion (Yang et al. 2021)). Lin and Wang (Lin and Wang ,2020) assert that factors such as the growing population of middle-income earners, the burst of the tech bubble, and increased life expectancy have collectively contributed to substantial societal growth over time. In 1950, Asia's elderly population numbered approximately 57.6 million, constituting only 4.1% of the region's total population. However, projections indicate that by the mid-21st century, the elderly population is expected to soar to 922.7 million, with their proportion rising to 17.5%. While Asia accounted for just 44% of the global elderly population in 1950, this figure is anticipated to surge to 62% by 2050 (UN, 2006). Population ageing stands as a monumental force shaping the landscape of sustainable development. Its ramifications ripple through economies, societies, and the environment, bearing profound implications. This demographic shift arises from a confluence of factors: sustained decreases in fertility rates and heightened life expectancies. These trends stem largely from advancements in healthcare, including the mitigation of infant, child, and maternal mortality, alongside the containment of communicable diseases and better management of non-communicable ones. The extension of lifespans marks a commendable achievement of progress. Yet, population ageing is an inexorable trend, necessitating proactive policies and governmental intervention. Nations must navigate this demographic transition adeptly to uphold sustainable economic growth, combat poverty, and mitigate disparities (UNESCAP,2017). South Asia, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, boasts a substantial portion of its population in the working age group— a phenomenon known as the demographic window of opportunity. However, this varies across the

individual countries. Over recent decades, demographic trends indicate a growing proportion of elderly individuals throughout the region. By 2015, the number of people aged 60 and over had surged to 154 million, a threefold increase from the 54 million recorded in 1980. Additionally, average life expectancy at birth in South Asia has risen from 37 years in 1950-1955 to nearly 68 years in 2010-2015. Within the region, the percentage of the older population ranges from 14% in Sri Lanka to 4% in Afghanistan. Life expectancy also varies significantly, from 76 years in the Maldives to 62 years in Afghanistan (UNPP, 2017 Revision). By 2015, Sri Lanka saw its elderly population increase from 11% in 1950 to 14%, while Afghanistan's elderly population decreased slightly from 5% to 4%. In the same period, India and Pakistan recorded elderly populations of approximately 8.9% and 8.5%, respectively, ranking them second and third in South Asia. Future projections suggest that by 2050, the proportion of elderly people in the Maldives, Bhutan, and Bangladesh could double or even triple compared to 2015. However, the growth in the elderly population is expected to proceed more slowly in Pakistan and Afghanistan from 2015 to 2100 (Prasad & Goli, 2019).

Literature Review

What is ageing

Consider ageing as "the gradual changes occurring in our bodies over time." This definition encompasses the various processes that unfold as the human body matures, distinct from the outward manifestations often associated with ageing, such as grey hair and wrinkles. Ageing encompasses internally driven changes, like the growth spurts experienced during puberty, and cumulative effects, such as skin damage from prolonged sun exposure. Ultimately, ageing is a blend of physiological transformations within our bodies and external influences from the environment. While some environmental factors are beyond our control, certain aspects can be altered, potentially impacting the trajectory of ageing (Stibich, 2023).

Ageing is a continuous process that unfolds within cells, organs, and entire organisms as time passes. It encompasses the entirety of an adult's life span and is the focus of gerontology, a field dedicated to comprehending and managing all factors influencing the finite nature of life. Gerontology extends beyond addressing debilitation, delving into a broad array of phenomena. Each species possesses a unique life history wherein individual life spans are intricately linked to reproductive cycles, developmental pathways, and evolutionary mechanisms. Understanding these interrelations is pivotal in both gerontology and evolutionary biology. Moreover, it is crucial to differentiate between the natural

physicochemical ageing processes and the incidental organismic events, such as disease and injury, that ultimately lead to death (Guarente, Rogers, and Simic,2024).

Gerontology

Gerontology encompasses the comprehensive scientific exploration of ageing, addressing its multifaceted aspects including biological, clinical, psychological, sociological, legal, economic, and political dimensions. In contrast, geriatrics specifically focuses on the medical domain, concentrating on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of health issues linked to old age and the ageing process ("National Research Council (US) Committee on Chemical Toxicology and Aging", 1987).

Historically, social gerontology has been defined as the examination of the social, economic, and demographic features of older individuals and an ageing population. However, in recent times, this definition has broadened to encompass considerations of health, technology, and overall lifestyle (Phillips, Ajrouch, Nalletamby, 2010). The challenges within gerontology can be classified into four primary domains: (1) social and economic challenges arising from the growing elderly population, (2) psychological facets of ageing encompassing cognitive function and individual adaptation, (3) physiological underpinnings of ageing, including pathological variations and health conditions, and (4) overarching biological aspects of ageing across various animal species (Encyclopedia Britannica,2021).

Theories of Ageing

Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

Socioemotional selectivity theory, crafted by Stanford psychology professor Laura Carstensen, delineates a motivational framework spanning life. It posits that individuals tend to refine their pursuit of goals as they age, with older individuals gravitating towards objectives fostering significance and positive emotions, while younger counterparts lean towards goals geared towards knowledge acquisition (Vinney,2020). Despite the cognitive and physical losses and decrease in social connections that are common with ageing, research shows that emotional performance tends to remain stable or even increase as people age. This seeming paradox can be explained using Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), which proposes that perceptions of time remaining in life have a substantial impact on the selection and pursuit of social and emotional goals. Young adults frequently focus on developing their identities and acquiring potentially useful knowledge while maintaining wider social networks. Older individuals, on the other hand, tend to limit their social networks to those who promote their emotional

well-being (Hofer, 2020). According to Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, goal priority evolves with age: as people get older, objectives with emotional significance take precedence over those oriented-on learning knowledge, in contrast to younger adults, who tend to focus on knowledge-related goals. SST implies that older persons place a higher priority on emotionally significant goals than younger adults (Carstensen et al., 1999). This argument is consistent with persuasion research, which shows that communications that are relevant to people's current goals are more convincing (Fung and Carstensen, 2003). As a result, the theory predicts that older persons will respond more positively to communications appealing to emotionally relevant goals than those emphasizing knowledge-related goals, whereas younger adults will not exhibit this bias.

Reliability theory of ageing and longevity

Reliability theory posits that systems, even those composed of non-ageing elements with a constant failure rate, will deteriorate over time if they contain redundant, irreplaceable elements. Ageing, therefore, results directly from the redundancy within systems. Moreover, reliability theory anticipates the phenomenon of late-life mortality deceleration followed by levelling-off, as well as late-life mortality plateaus, as a consequence of exhausting redundancy at extreme old ages (Gavrilov & Gavrilova, 2001). Reliability theory describes the likelihood of a system performing its expected function over a certain period. It is the foundation of reliability engineering, a field of study that focuses on optimizing the dependability, or chance of successful operation, of systems such as aeroplanes, linear accelerators, and other products. It developed independently of the mainstream of probability and statistics. It was originally designed to assist nineteenth-century maritime and life insurance businesses in determining viable rates to charge their customers. Even now, the phrases "failure rate" and "hazard rate" are frequently used interchangeably (Mehta, 2015). Reliability theory comprises a wide range of concepts, mathematical frameworks, and methodologies for forecasting, measuring, understanding, and improving the longevity and failure patterns of systems and their constituent parts (Barlow and Proschan,1975).

Objectives

Main Objective

To provide a thorough analysis of the socioeconomic and health-related difficulties confronting South Asian countries' ageing populations, as well as to recommend effective policy measures and

interventions to support long-term development and improve the quality of life for older persons in this region.

Specific Objectives

- To identify and evaluate the important demographic trends and variables influencing population ageing in South Asian countries, such as migration, fertility rates, and changes in life expectancy.
- To investigate the impact of ageing on South Asian healthcare systems, pension plans, and social support structures, with a focus on identifying any gaps and obstacles.
  To assess the efficiency of present policies and initiatives aimed at assisting the elderly in South Asian countries, as well as to find best practices and new ideas from regional and global perspectives.
- To propose suggestions to policymakers on improving economic possibilities, social inclusion, and access to healthcare for the elderly, assuring their active engagement in society and contribution to economic progress.

Methodology

The technique for this study on "Challenges of Ageing and Development in South Asian Countries" used a desk research strategy, relying solely on secondary data sources to investigate the socioeconomic and health-related issues encountered by the region's ageing populations. The study drew on a variety of secondary data sources, including academic journals, reports from international organizations such as the WHO and UN, government publications, and NGO and think tank studies. This data was evaluated using thematic and comparative analysis methodologies to uncover major trends, issues, and policy responses in several South Asian countries. Content analysis was used to integrate information and reach conclusions regarding the efficacy of present techniques and the need for new approaches.

Result and Findings

This study investigates the multiple issues posed by ageing populations in South Asian countries, as well as the implications for development. In an era of fast demographic shifts, South Asia faces particular socioeconomic and healthcare issues, worsened by a rising older population. To fully comprehend and overcome these difficulties, this study used a secondary data analysis approach. Using current data and literature, the study attempts to give a comprehensive exploration of the complexity of ageing and

development in South Asian countries. The study's analytical perspective intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights and recommendations to enhance policy and practice in the region's ageing and development sectors.

Table 01. The gender-wise proportion of people aged 60 years in South Asia

Countries	1950 (Male)	1950 (Female)	2015 (Male)	2015 (Female)	2050 (Male)	2050 (Female)	2100 (Male)	2100 (Female)
Afghanistan	5.38	4.65	3.72	4.32	8.43	9.23	25.16	29.69
Bangladesh	5.90	5.70	7.06	7.06	20.93	23.14	38.28	40.29
Bhutan	4.14	4.47	7.05	6.63	25.21	21.99	36.39	37.70
India	5.20	5.59	8.37	9.52	17.72	20.54	30.60	33.92
Maldives	5.82	3.38	5.46	6.63	29.48	26.97	39.41	39.42
Nepal	3.54	3.98	8.22	8.84	14.68	21.27	37.74	40.67
Pakistan	7.78	7.87	6.56	6.64	12.27	13.62	23.87	27.36
Sri Lanka	12.25	9.41	12.81	14.98	26.13	31.15	37.64	41.95
South Asia	5.86	5.86	8.02	8.89	17.57	20.21	30.36	33.58

(Source: United Nations Population Prospects, 2017 Revision)

Chart 01. The gender-wise proportion of people aged 60 years in South Asia
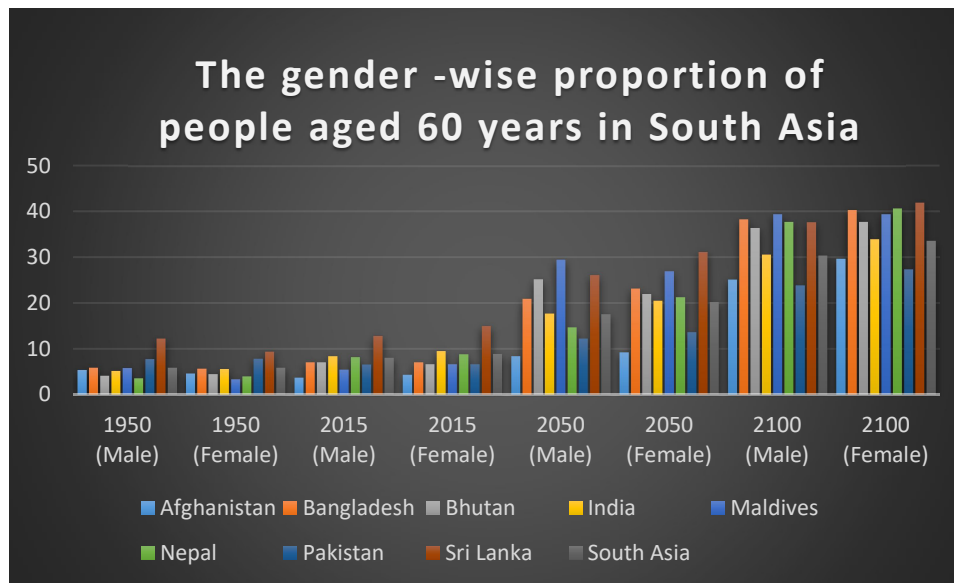
(Source: United Nations Population Prospects, 2017 Revision)

The data from the table provides valuable insights into the demographic landscape of South Asian countries concerning the proportion of individuals aged 60 years and above. Across the temporal

spectrum from 1950 to projected figures for 2100, a consistent trend of increasing elderly populations is evident across all countries in the region. This trend aligns with global demographic shifts towards ageing populations and underscores the imperative for policymakers to anticipate and address the evolving needs of older adults through targeted policies and interventions.

Gender disparities in the elderly population are strikingly apparent, with females consistently outnumbering males across all periods and countries. This gender imbalance reflects broader global patterns, driven by factors such as longer life expectancies for women and differential mortality rates between genders. Understanding and addressing these gender-specific dynamics are crucial for the formulation of equitable healthcare, social, and economic policies tailored to the needs of both male and female elderly populations.

While common trends exist, variations in the proportion of elderly individuals are notable among South Asian countries. Sri Lanka emerges as a standout, consistently exhibiting higher proportions of elderly individuals compared to its regional counterparts. These variations likely stem from diverse factors including differences in healthcare infrastructure, socio-economic development, and cultural norms influencing longevity and population ageing. Policymakers must consider these regional variations in crafting targeted interventions to meet the unique needs of ageing populations across South Asia.

The increasing proportion of elderly individuals carries significant implications for healthcare, social policy, and economic sustainability in South Asian countries. Policymakers face the dual challenge of ensuring adequate support and services for the growing elderly population while also addressing the economic implications of population ageing. Strategies to sustain economic productivity, support retirement incomes, and manage healthcare expenditures are imperative to mitigate the fiscal burden associated with ageing populations and ensure the well-being of older adults in the region.

Looking ahead, the projections for 2050 and 2100 signal further increases in the proportion of elderly individuals across South Asian countries. These projections underscore the urgency of proactive planning and policy development to address the evolving demographic landscape. By prioritizing healthcare, social welfare, and economic sustainability, policymakers can effectively navigate the challenges and harness the opportunities presented by an ageing population, thereby ensuring a prosperous and inclusive future for all segments of society in South Asia.

In his June 2018 study, Masud Chand investigates the challenges and opportunities posed by ageing populations in South Asia. The paper utilizes secondary data to examine the demographic landscape in South Asian countries, drawing insights from policies implemented in other nations undergoing similar demographic transitions. The findings reveal numerous challenges associated with ageing populations, including escalating pension and healthcare costs, higher dependency ratios, and shifting family dynamics. However, amidst these challenges, South Asia stands to benefit from a one-time demographic dividend, presenting policymakers and managers with a unique opportunity for strategic intervention. Despite its valuable insights, the study acknowledges limitations inherent in its reliance on secondary data and its perspective-based approach. Nonetheless, it provides practical implications for organizations, advocating for the management of a multigenerational workforce through accommodations for older employees, mentoring programs, and mixed-age work teams. Moreover, the research sheds light on the social implications of ageing populations, emphasizing the need for robust pension and healthcare systems to address rising dependency ratios and the transition to single-family households. Overall, Chand's study contributes to our understanding of the impending demographic transition in South Asia, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for policy and management interventions.

Both Canning (2007) and Horioka (2007) have explored the broader macroeconomic implications of demographic shifts, analyzing how changes in age distribution affect labor supply and income, household savings, and consumption patterns. Their findings suggest several outcomes, including a likely decrease in labor supply, reduced savings and investment rates, and decelerated economic growth, provided productivity growth remains unchanged. Horioka, in particular, provides data from various studies, including cross-country analyses and household surveys, highlighting a notable detrimental effect on both individual and national saving rates due to ageing.

Additionally, Canning and Horioka have examined how ageing might impact pension systems and broader fiscal transfer mechanisms. They compare two types of systems: unfunded pay-as-you-go (PAYG) schemes, which finance retirees' benefits directly from current workers' earnings, and funded pensions, which are supported by assets accumulated through workers' contributions over time. Their analysis suggests that overly generous PAYG systems with incentives for early retirement might do more harm than good, reducing older workers' participation in the labor force, straining public finances, decreasing national savings, and compromising fairness between generations. On the other hand, funded pensions tend to boost savings and support equitable treatment across generations.

Canning refers to these outcomes as "accounting effects" of ageing, assuming consistent age-specific behaviors, yet he also notes that demographic ageing can alter these behaviors. For instance, lower fertility rates may increase female workforce participation, and longer life expectancies might extend working ages.

Mujahid, G., & Siddhisena, K.A.P. (2009) in their work, *Papers in Population Ageing No. 6: DEMOGRAPHIC PROGNOSIS FOR SOUTH ASIA: A future of rapid ageing*, outline several critical dynamics of the aging population in South Asia that necessitate thoughtful policy response and programmatic adjustments. Their analysis reveals three distinct characteristics that increasingly define the older demographic: the growth of the "oldest old" segment, the feminization of the older population, and more pronounced aging in rural areas. These factors combined present unique challenges and require specific considerations in policy formulations.

Firstly, the surge in the population of the "oldest old"—those aged 80 and above—is significant. This group is expanding rapidly due to improvements in life expectancy and survival at older ages, with projections showing an increase from 8% of the older population in 2000 to 15% by 2050. This shift means that a larger segment of the population will likely require specialized health services, including long-term and disability care, pointing to a need for enhanced healthcare infrastructure and services tailored to the complexities associated with advanced age.

The feminization of the aging population is another critical aspect. Women tend to live longer than men, resulting in higher numbers of older women, especially among the oldest old. This demographic shift is intensified by higher rates of widowhood, divorce, or remaining unmarried among older women, amplifying their vulnerability. Policies must therefore prioritize the socio-economic security and protection of older women, particularly in light of their increased risk of abuse and financial dependency.

Rural areas in South Asia are experiencing more significant demographic ageing compared to urban centers, which raises concerns about the adequacy of rural health and social services. Older individuals in rural settings often face more significant challenges in accessing healthcare and social support, compounded by the higher incidence of poverty. Government policies must address these disparities by ensuring that rural health systems are adequately equipped and that social programs are accessible to those living in rural communities.

Furthermore, the broader social security frameworks in South Asia are notably weak, with minimal coverage, leaving many older adults vulnerable to poverty and neglect. This gap in social protection calls for an urgent expansion of social security systems and welfare programs to include more comprehensive benefits for the elderly. Additionally, as elder abuse becomes an increasingly recognized issue, especially in settings where older individuals may be isolated due to the preference for nuclear family structures, there must be proactive efforts to protect older adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Overall, governments in South Asia need to develop robust, inclusive policies and programs that consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of the ageing population. This includes enhancing healthcare services, strengthening family and community support systems, and ensuring gender-sensitive approaches to address the specific challenges faced by older women. The potential of older individuals to contribute to societal and economic development should not be underestimated, and fostering an environment that supports their health, security, and continued participation in society is crucial for leveraging this potential.

Alam (2007) provides an insightful overview of the challenges of ageing in South Asia in his article titled "Ageing in South Asia: An Overview and Emerging Issues for Policy Planning and Research," highlighting the region's complex socioeconomic landscape and its implications for policy planning and research. Despite notable GDP growth and an expanding middle-income population, South Asia grapples with persistent issues such as income inequality, widespread poverty, informal labor markets, governance deficiencies, and inadequate public services, including healthcare. The absence or limited provision of old-age security and social insurance exacerbates the vulnerability of the elderly population.

The changing age composition in South Asia, characterized by simultaneous growth in both younger and older demographics, further complicates the socio-economic dynamics of the region. While Alam's analysis doesn't delve deeply into economic specifics, it underscores the pervasive disparities and the challenging environment faced by vulnerable groups, particularly the elderly.

Alam draws attention to significant observations, particularly regarding the labor force dynamics across the region. Despite intra-regional differences in population size and socio-economic attributes, all five countries in South Asia experience similar growth rates in their labor forces. This phenomenon suggests that creating high-quality employment opportunities to accommodate the influx of new entrants into the labor market remains a pressing challenge. Additionally, Alam points out the potential implications for

intergenerational resource transfers, highlighting the risk that younger individuals engaged in low-paid, low-productivity informal employment may struggle to generate sufficient resources to support the elderly population.

Overall, Alam's analysis underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy measures and targeted research initiatives to address the multifaceted challenges posed by ageing in South Asia. Efforts to enhance social protection mechanisms, promote inclusive economic growth, and strengthen the labour market will be essential in ensuring the well-being and security of the region's ageing population.

Beaudry and Over (2013) present an analysis of ageing in South Asia, focusing on two distinct perspectives: the attitudes and beliefs of elders in Southern India and the long-term care of the elderly in Southern Sri Lanka. With projections indicating a substantial increase in the elderly population across developing nations in Asia, including India and Sri Lanka, the study sheds light on the emerging concerns regarding the health, well-being, and social policy implications for this growing demographic.

India, as the second most populous country globally, is anticipated to witness a significant surge in its elderly population, with projections suggesting that by 2050, adults aged 60 years and older will constitute 19% of the total population. This demographic shift raises concerns about the health and support systems available for the elderly, highlighting the need for robust social policies to address their evolving needs. Conversely, Sri Lanka is identified as the fastest aging nation in South Asia, facing challenges such as an increase in the "oldest old" population, a decline in working-age adults, and rising disability rates among the elderly, potentially leading to an increased demand for long-term care facilities.

The study employs a multifaceted approach, combining quantitative analysis of data from Southern India and qualitative investigation of elder homes in Southern Sri Lanka. Findings from the Kerala Aging Survey unveil significant levels of psychological distress among elders, particularly among women, the poor, and those of advanced age. Notably, dissatisfaction with support from children emerges as a contributing factor to psychological distress among elders, underscoring the importance of familial support networks in elder care.

In the qualitative study on Sri Lankan elder homes, familial and community support emerge as crucial elements in the long-term care of elderly individuals. Despite facing chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) or disabilities, many residents rely on these facilities due to the lack of familial support.

The study also highlights the financial challenges faced by elder homes, which heavily depend on community donations for their operations, indicating gaps in government support for elder care services.

Overall, Beaudry and Over's analysis provides valuable insights into the complex landscape of ageing in South Asia, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions and policies to address the evolving needs of the elderly population in the region. Efforts to strengthen familial and community support networks, enhance mental health services, and improve access to long-term care facilities are essential to ensure the well-being and dignity of older adults in Southern India and Sri Lanka.

In their working paper, "Demographic Change and Economic Growth in South Asia," authored by David E. Bloom, David Canning, and Larry Rosenberg and published in February 2011, the authors delve into the often overlooked yet crucial aspect of demographic change and its impact on economic growth in the South Asian region. Traditionally, economists have focused on various factors influencing economic growth, but demographic change has frequently been sidelined. However, recent evidence underscores the significant contribution demographic shifts can make to economic development, offering valuable insights into past growth trajectories and prospects for South Asia.

The authors highlight the remarkable improvements in population health across South Asia over the past six decades, with substantial declines in infant and child mortality rates. These improvements, driven by advancements in healthcare, education, urbanization, and family planning programs, have led to a demographic transition characterized by a decline in fertility rates following improved child survival. Consequently, South Asian countries now boast relatively large cohorts of young people entering or soon to enter the prime working ages, setting the stage for potential economic growth acceleration.

Central to their analysis is the concept of the demographic dividend, a phenomenon arising from changes in the age structure of a population, which can catalyze faster economic growth. The demographic dividend comprises several forces, including the expansion of the labor force, increased investment in human and physical capital, heightened female workforce participation, and greater savings potential, particularly during prime working years.

However, the realization of the demographic dividend hinges crucially on policy choices and the broader economic environment. Effective governance, sound macroeconomic management, investment in healthcare, education, and reproductive health, as well as supportive labor and capital market policies, are essential for maximizing the economic benefits of demographic change. Conversely, neglecting

these factors or adopting counterproductive policies could impede the realization of the demographic dividend.

The authors offer specific policy recommendations tailored to the South Asian context, emphasizing the need to accelerate fertility decline, ensure employment opportunities for the burgeoning working-age population, invest in healthcare and education, and pursue sound macroeconomic policies. They also underscore the importance of services over manufacturing in driving sustainable growth and stress the significance of trade policies, government institutions, and international relations in fostering economic development.

In conclusion, Bloom, Canning, and Rosenberg provide a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between demographic change and economic growth in South Asia, highlighting the potential for harnessing the demographic dividend to propel the region toward greater prosperity. Their insights underscore the imperative of informed policymaking and strategic interventions to capitalize on demographic transitions and unlock South Asia's economic potential.

The central theme of D.K.Y. Abeywardhana's 2019 paper revolves around the socio-economic challenges posed by the aging population in South Asia and its implications for economic growth. It critically examines how the demographic shift towards a larger elderly population and a shrinking working-age demographic affects the region's economic stability and growth prospects.

This study begins by setting the context of global demographic trends, highlighting a significant decrease in the share of the working-age population. This trend is not isolated but is a global phenomenon with specific implications for South Asia. The core argument posits that the decreasing labor force due to aging will inherently lead to lower economic growth unless significant policy interventions are implemented.

The paper is structured to first assess the current and projected impacts of these demographic changes on South Asia's economies. It discusses the 'South Asia 2050 employment targets,' a strategic plan intended to offset the economic impacts of an aging population. However, this paper questions the sufficiency of these targets in compensating for the demographic burden. The findings suggest that the shrinking working-age population remains a formidable challenge, with GDP growth heavily reliant on demographic trends.

One of the key contributions of this paper is its analysis of how population aging translates into higher dependency ratios—where more individuals, having exited the workforce, rely financially on a smaller working-age population. This shift results in increased expenditures, particularly in healthcare, which are predominantly shouldered by governments in South Asian countries. Such dynamics exert substantial pressure on economic resources, impacting public spending and fiscal stability.

The paper extends the discussion to the variance in the magnitude of population aging across different countries within South Asia, indicating that the economic impact and policy responses might need to be tailored to each country's specific context. This nuanced approach underscores the complexity of demographic impacts across a region that is diverse in terms of economic development, cultural backgrounds, and political structures.

In addressing policy implications, the paper strongly advocates for proactive measures including the enhancement of employment generation policies, investment in healthcare and old age support systems, and fostering self-dependency among the aging population. These recommendations are framed within the need for a balanced approach that not only supports the elderly but also fosters an environment conducive to economic growth and stability.

The paper serves as a crucial reminder of the impending economic challenges faced by South Asia due to demographic changes. It calls for a comprehensive policy framework that integrates employment, healthcare, and social security with the overarching goal of sustaining economic growth amid demographic headwinds. The paper not only contributes to the academic discourse on demographic economics but also serves as a guide for policymakers in the region to craft strategies that are resilient in the face of an aging population.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

The research presented in this study offers a comprehensive examination of the challenges and opportunities arising from ageing populations in South Asian countries and their implications for development. Through a meticulous analysis of demographic shifts, socioeconomic dynamics, and policy frameworks, the study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the issue. The findings underscore the urgency of addressing the socioeconomic and healthcare challenges exacerbated by the rising older population in the region.

Key contributions from various scholars shed light on critical aspects such as the feminization of ageing, the impact on labour force dynamics, and the potential for harnessing the demographic dividend. Additionally, analyses of pension systems, healthcare infrastructure, and social security frameworks highlight the need for robust policy interventions to ensure the well-being and inclusion of ageing populations.

Moreover, the research emphasizes the importance of tailored approaches to address the diverse needs and vulnerabilities of older individuals across different socio-economic contexts within South Asia. From enhancing healthcare services to promoting inclusive economic growth and strengthening social protection mechanisms, the study underscores the imperative of proactive policy measures.

Overall, the findings presented in this research provide a valuable foundation for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to develop targeted strategies aimed at mitigating the challenges posed by demographic ageing while leveraging the potential contributions of older populations to societal and economic development. By heeding these insights and implementing evidence-based policies, South Asian countries can navigate the complexities of demographic transitions and foster inclusive and sustainable development for all members of society.

Suggestions

Considering the findings of the study on ageing populations in South Asia, several key recommendations can be proposed to address the multifaceted challenges highlighted:

Firstly, establishing robust longitudinal research initiatives is paramount. These studies would track the socio-economic dynamics and health outcomes of ageing populations over time, providing invaluable insights into their evolving needs and vulnerabilities. Such longitudinal data can inform evidence-based policy interventions and programmatic adjustments tailored to the specific contexts and demographic trends observed in South Asian countries.

Secondly, there is a pressing need for policy evaluation and reform. Comprehensive assessments of existing social protection mechanisms, healthcare systems, and pension schemes are essential to identify gaps and inefficiencies. These evaluations should inform targeted policy reforms aimed at enhancing the socio-economic security and well-being of older adults, ensuring that they are adequately supported in their later years.

Furthermore, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration is crucial. By bringing together researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and social scientists, holistic approaches to addressing ageing-related challenges can be developed. This interdisciplinary collaboration can lead to innovative solutions that integrate healthcare, social protection, and economic development strategies, effectively meeting the diverse needs of ageing populations.

Community-centered approaches should also be prioritized. Engaging communities in the design and implementation of interventions ensures that they are culturally relevant, accessible, and sustainable. Leveraging existing community networks and resources can enhance the effectiveness of interventions aimed at supporting ageing populations, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members.

Investing in capacity building initiatives is another important recommendation. Healthcare providers, social workers, and policymakers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the unique needs of older populations. Training programs, workshops, and knowledge exchange platforms focused on ageing-related issues can help build a skilled workforce capable of delivering high-quality care and support.

Additionally, international collaboration should be encouraged. South Asian countries can benefit from sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches with other regions facing similar demographic challenges. By fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, stakeholders can accelerate progress towards addressing the socio-economic and healthcare needs of ageing populations effectively.

Finally, advocating for policy reforms is essential. Engaging policymakers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of addressing the needs of ageing populations can mobilize support for policy action. Advocacy efforts should focus on strengthening social protection mechanisms, enhancing healthcare infrastructure, and promoting age-friendly environments to ensure the health, well-being, and socio-economic inclusion of older adults in South Asia.

References:

Abeywardhana, D.K.Y. (2019). The impact of ageing population on economic growth in South Asia. *Asian Social Science, 15*(7), 70. https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v15n7p70

Alam, M. (2007). *Ageing in South Asia: An overview and emerging issues for policy planning and research*. Paper to be presented at the seminar on 'Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing in the Context of Changing Families', jointly organized by the UNDESA and the UNESCAP, July 25-27, 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.

ang, Y., Zheng, R., & Zhao, L. (2021). Population Aging, Health Investment and Economic Growth: Based on a Cross-Country Panel Data Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(4), 1801. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041801

Asian Development Bank. (2022). Asian Development Bank Outlook. Retrieved from https://www.adb.org/outlook.

ayawardhana, T., Anuththara, S., Nimnadi, T., Karadanaarachchi, R., Jayathilaka, R., & Galappaththi, K. (2023). Asian ageing: The relationship between the elderly population and economic growth in the Asian context. *PLoS One, 18*(4), e0284895. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284895

Barlow, R. E., & Proschan, F. (1975). *Statistical theory of reliability and life testing: Probability models*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Beaudry, L. J. (2013). *Aging in South Asia: Attitudes/Beliefs of Elders in Southern India and Long-Term Care of the Elderly in Southern Sri Lanka* (Master's thesis). Duke University. https://hdl.handle.net/10161/7276.

Behura, N. K., & Moanty, R. P. (2005). Aged in changing social system - their problem. Discovery Publishing House.

Bloom, D. E., Canning, D., & Rosenberg, L. (2011). *Demographic change and economic growth in South Asia* (PGDA Working Paper No. 67). http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pgda/working.htm

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2021, December 6). *gerontology and geriatrics*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/science/gerontology.

Canning, D. (2007). The impact of ageing on Asian development. Paper presented at the Ageing Asia: A New Challenge for the Region seminar, Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting, Kyoto, Japan.

Carstensen, L. L., Isaacowitz, D. M., & Charles, S. T. (1999). Taking time seriously: A theory of socioemotional selectivity. *American Psychologist, 54*(3), 165–181. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.3.165

Chand, M. (2018). Aging in South Asia: challenges and opportunities. *South Asian Journal of Business Studies, 7*(2). DOI: 10.1108/SAJBS-09-2017-0103. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325907286_Aging_in_South_Asia_challenges_and_opportunities.

Fung, H. H., & Carstensen, L. L. (2003). Sending memorable messages to the old: Age differences in preferences and memory for advertisements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*(1), 163–178. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.1.163

Gavrilov, L. A., & Gavrilova, N. S. (2001). The reliability theory of ageing and longevity. *Journal of Theoretical Biology, 213*(4), 527–545. https://doi.org/10.1006/jtbi.2001.2430

Guarente, L. P., Rogers, K., & Simic, P. (2024, March 13). Aging. In Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/science/aging-life-process

Hofer, M. (2020). Socioemotional selectivity theory: Aging and media preferences. *International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0266.

Horioka, C. Y. (2007). Ageing, saving, and fiscal policy. Paper presented at the Ageing Asia: A New Challenge for the Region seminar, Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting, Kyoto, Japan.

Jackson, R. (2006). *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision.* New York: United Nations.

Lin, F. L., & Wang, M. C. (2020). Longevity and Economic Growth in China and India Using a Newly Developed Bootstrap ARDL Model. *Frontiers in Public Health, 8*, 291. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00291

Mason, A., & Lee, R. (2022). Six Ways Population Change Will Affect the Global Economy. Network of the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Change. Wiley Online Library, 48(1), 51–73.

Mujahid, G., & Siddhisena, K.A.P. (2009). *Demographic prognosis for South Asia: A future of rapid ageing* (Papers in Population Ageing No. 6). Asia and the Pacific Regional Office. https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/papers%20in%20pop%20ageing%20

National Research Council (US) Committee on Chemical Toxicology and Aging (1987), the book "Ageing In Today's Environment," particularly the section on "Principles of Gerontology," provides valuable insights into the conceptual context of gerontology.Phillips, J., Ajrouch, K., & Hillcoat-Nalletamby, S. (2010). *Key concepts in Social Gerontology*. Sage Publications.

Prasad, R. D., & Goli, S. (2019). Is South Asia prepared for ageing challenges? *Geography and You, 19*(19 & 20), 10-15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334965506.

Reference: Mehta, K. (2015). *A thesis on a study of reliability theory of aging and longevity* (Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Science, Statistics). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10603/143839

Stibich, M. (2023, January 05). *Aging Types, Causes, and Prevention.* https://www.verywellhealth.com/what-is-aging-2224347.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (2017). *Addressing the challenges of population ageing in Asia and the Pacific* (Sales No. E.17.II.F.17). United Nations.https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Addressing-the-Challenges-of-Population-Ageing.pdf.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2017). *World population prospects: The 2017 revision*. https://bit.ly/2DIjHJT.

Vinney, C. (2020, February 13). What Is Socioemotional Selectivity Theory? ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-socioemotional-selectivity-theory-4783769.

World Health Organization. (2022, October 1). Ageing and health. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health.

World Health Organization. (n.d.). Ageing. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/health-topics/ageing#tab=tab_1.