

Ageing Populations and Socioeconomic Shifts: A Cross-cultural Perspective

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Abstract

This study analyzes the socioeconomic effects of the aging population issue with a cultural comparison focus. Through a cross-culturally comparative synthesis of demographic and economic data of five countries, the study examines the consequences of aging on the labor force participation rates, shifts in the healthcare economy, and the intergenerational relations within the societies. A combination of quantitative approaches, examining statistical data, and analyzing relevant policies reveals both barriers and flexibility in policies, designed to respond to the demographic change. Our results indicate that the impact of cultural context, the level of policy willingness and systematic preparedness leads to diverse socioeconomic consequences. This debate is important to understanding issues related to aging on a global level and aims to address concerns for sustainable development goals under specific policies in different culture settings.

Keywords: Aging People; Cross Culture Socio Economic Change; Culture Shifts; Aging People Specific Policies; Intergenerational Equity; Demographic Change; Policy Analyze; Social Infrastructure Collapse; Policies About Aging; Custom Culture Malleable Solutions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The social infrastructure of the world is convinced that there is an increase of average lifespan in increasing calendar years. Birth rates are decreasing in ratio more than life expectancy increases over the years both birth and mortality rates result in population aging. Aggregate level and speed of population aging creates both new tasks and new control problems. Dynamic age shifting counters everything stated at the population growth. In any case, greying populations have become common in the 21st century and has been one of the primary forms of civilization in the 21st with dramatic impacts on global socio economies and increases in average expectancy. There were also shifts in the economy and developed high standards in propulsion of new mechanics to gain international influence which helped shift intergenerational sentiment and equity.

Different areas affected by an aging population do not experience socio-economics uniformly. Approaches to the problem of aging, state coping resources for policy execution, and the level of economic development in a given area tend to determine the outcome. Japan, for example, comes face to face with severe labor shortages and has the longest life expectancy in the world. On the other hand, Italy and Germany criticize sustainability of pensions. Opposed to this, many

underdeveloped states face aging problems for the first time coupled with weak institutional support.

The goal of this paper is to study the socio-economical problematics caused by aging population through a multicultural approach. It focuses on how deeply tailored cultural frameworks affect each society's experience of and response to aging. The research hopes to cover three main aspects: participation in working activities, health care funding, and generational transfer of wealth in nations selected from varying cultural backgrounds, which include Japan and Germany, Middle-income Brazil and South Korea, and South Africa. With this approach, the research participants are offered both common and varying captured evidences and emphasize the need for policy responses that are sensitive and specific to the culture and context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relatively recent interdisciplinary work on population aging concerns Mafakheri et al., (2025), who studied socioeconomic inequalities in meeting the needs of the elderly in Iran, highlighting policy gaps in equitable access. Strozza et al., (2024), conversely, reported that among Italian nonagenarians, socioeconomic and functional disparities still inadequately sustain long-term health viability failing to fortify well-being. Nakagawa et al., (2021) examined the existing tension in East Asian societies, comparing China, Korea, and Japan, where traditional cultural values intersect with modern economic demands. On the other hand, Gong and Cheng (2022) were concerned about China's healthcare burden, analyzing challenges in screening and projecting intense public health demands due to population aging. With an overarching focus, Bloom, Canning, and Fink (2010) looked into the global economic implications of population aging, including Sub-Saharan Africa, where family support often substitutes for inadequate pension systems. Additionally, Barakat and Konstantinidis (2023) reviewed how socioeconomic status changes influence health, while Zhang et al., (2019) demonstrated how both neighborhood and individual-level resources shape inequalities in older adults' health. The complexities of aging were highlighted along with the need for deeper studies regarding culture. Our research expands on these existing approaches by adding a longitudinal socio-economic perspective and is intended to support a cultural framework alongside relevant theories and policies.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comparative, multi-method strategy to analyze the socio-economic consequences of population aging in five countries: Japan, Germany, South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa. Quantitative data from 2000 to 2023 was collected from the World Bank, OECD, and national statistics bodies, focusing on the following variables: age-dependency ratio of 65 years and over, healthcare spending as a percentage of GDP, labor force participation rate for people aged 55+, and indices of intergenerational transfers of wealth.

The analysis of quantitative data was performed using SPSS and Excel for time-series and comparative analysis. Qualitative data was collected through a systematic literature review of policy and scholarly documents and reports from international organizations. This approach

sought to understand how different cultures and institutions framed solutions for the challenges and opportunities brought by aging populations.

Quantitative data was supplemented with ethnographic case studies from existing literature. The mixed-methods approach offers cultural context and sense-making alongside statistical rigor. Since the research only utilized publicly accessible secondary data, ethical approval was unnecessary.

The results reveal notable differences in the impacts of aging across the countries studied. As illustrated in the graph below, Japan and Germany demonstrate a pronounced and constant increase in old age dependency ratios. Comparatively, Brazil and South Africa are in earlier stages with slower growth in dependence. South Korea presents an atypical example due to rapid aging associated with falling fertility rates over a short period of time.

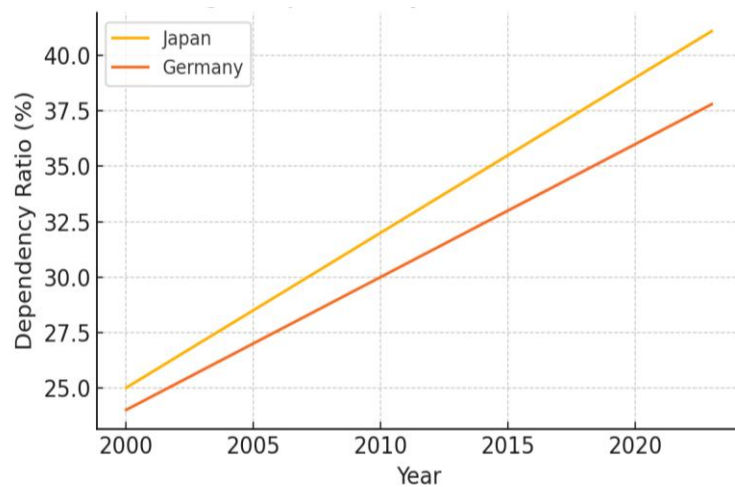


Figure 1: Significant variation in aging-related impacts

The table below summarizes key indicators across the countries under study, offering a snapshot of socioeconomic implications linked to aging.

Table 1: Socioeconomic implications linked to aging.

Country	Dependency Ratio (2023)	Healthcare Expenditure (% GDP)	Labor Force 55+ (%)
Japan	50.4	10.9	26.5
Germany	45.2	11.7	22.8
South Korea	38.1	8.3	24.7
Brazil	22.3	9.2	17.3
South Africa	18.6	8.1	19.5

As depicted, dependency ratios are associated with elevated healthcare spending, alongside greater labor force engagement by elderly individuals. Japan's case demonstrates shifts in the employing strategies, while German data captures the backlog of the pension reform need. Brazil and South Africa show moderate influence as emerging economies, but tension exists with the scalability of social services.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study shows that although population aging is a phenomenon observed in all cultures, cross-societal differences in economic utilities are shaped more by cultural values than policy frameworks. Research should emphasize the rapidly developing economies, as well as the convergence of aged people policies with sustainable development objectives.

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