

Does Population Ageing Affect the Least Developed Country Like Nepal?



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Short Communication

Aging is a global issue of importance in 21st century. Today many people are living longer than ever before. Increasing life expectancy and decline in fertility are very beneficial trends driving population aging around the world. For the country like Nepal whose life expectancy was around 54 years in 1991 is now [1] expected increased to 71 years in 2018. It shows that in every two years, average life expectancy is increasing by one year in Nepal. Elderly population growth rate is quite higher than population growth rate in Nepal [1,2]. Previous study shows that majority of Nepalese elderly are living with their children [1-5]. In the Nepali culture, generally parents live with their children especially with son [6]. A study shows more than 80% live with their children and only 2.7% elderly were living with their daughters [1]. Children are also considered as insurance for old age because other social security system is not well developed in Nepal [2]. Number of youth going to abroad for employment and higher studies is increasing rapidly in the recent decades. Anecdotal information indicates that the effect of internal and out migration has significantly affected the life of elderly people [7].

So far there has not been any National level study carried out focusing the issues of elderly so far. It shows Nepal government has not given more priority to this group of population. When we talk about the age structure of population the proportion of elderly 65 years and above is around 5 percent and this is not a significant number to give priority when compared with children and other age group population. Most of the study carried out focusing the issues of elderly is small in sample size. These studies show that Nepalese elderly are suffering from different types of social and health problems. A study shows 59% elderly are suffering from at least one chronic health problem. Major health problems faced by Nepalese elderly were blood pressure (23.4%), diabetes (13.2%), respiratory disease (12.8%), arthritis (9.4%), back pain (8.4 %) and heart disease (4.9) [8]. Further two

third Nepali elderly were found suffering from some form of loneliness [5,6].

A study related to functional disability of elderly 60 years and older shows 8.7% (8.5% for men, 8.9% for women) had functional disability in at least one Activities of Daily Living (ADL) items, and 29.2% (21.8% for men, 37.2% for women) in at least one Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL) items. The most common dysfunction among the five ADL items for men and women was bathing. When adults aged 65 years and above were considered, functional disability in ADL was 12.8% (12.3% for men, 13.3% for women) and IADL was 36.8% (26.0% for men, 50.0% for women) [9]. This is quite high compared to other countries, but it is difficult to compare due to different methodologies adopted to measure [8,9].

Recently, one study carried out by Chalise and Basnet in community living elderly shows the prevalence of elder abuse is 47.4% among community living elderly [3]. In Nepali culture, elderly generally prefer to stay with their children and living in old age home is not very common. But the number of old age homes is increasing recently in Nepal. There are about 1,500 elderly living in about 70 organizations registered all over Nepal at present [10]. One review study shows elderly abuse is a serious neglected issue in developing country [11] and a recent study shows that 58 percent of the respondents experienced at least one elder abuse before they arrived at the old age homes [12]. Further, study carried out in old age home shows, older adults residing in old age home have high depression rate. Prevalence of depression was 57.8%. Among them 46.7% had mild, 8.9% had moderate and 2.2% had severe depression [13]. Depression was found slightly lower in community living Rai ethnic elderly [14]. One recent study shows, Nepalese elderly who are forced to live in old age home due to their children's migration to foreign countries are not very happy as they are missing their children very much [7]. In some community the proportion of women

living alone was 11.6%, which is noteworthy for the Nepali culture [15]. It shows some change in living environment in the Nepal culture as well.

If we look the demographic situation of Nepal working age (15-64 years) population accounts 63% of the total population. There are only 5% elderly 65 years and older. Social security system for the elderly is not well developed. With the increased number of elderly population it will also create economic burden on health sector as well. Recently, number of youth going to foreign countries for labor work is increasing due to prevailing unemployment situation in the country. Some youth going to foreign countries for higher education in western countries have also started to settle down there. A recent study shows that Nepalese elderly are missing their children very much as there is no family member to take care of frail elderly [7].

Nepali society has many youth population but number of elderly is increasing rapidly. On the other hand country is poor and it has to invest more on infrastructure development. A major resource of country goes to children and woman. Elderly problems are fallen in the shadow by other priority issues in the poor countries like Nepal. In the coming days above research findings shows that elderly problem will be very chronic once number of elderly having ADLs limitation elderly increases and there will not children to take care of them. So, government should develop some appropriate policies how elderly can be involved in active ageing in the community as well as management of elderly in the local community using local resources.

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