Introduction

An aging population is currently a common phenomenon in the globe: the desires for a longer lifespan and the medical technology developed have allowed modern people to live in older ages. According to a report from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 382 million people in the world are at or over the age of 60 in 1980. Whereas in 2017, the number has increased to 962 million people. The data shows that the worldwide elderly population has more than doubled in less than 40 years. With this trend, the elderly population is going to increase even faster in the upcoming years. The report has estimated that the population at or over the age of 60 is very likely to double again by 2050, which is nearly 2.1 billion people. Several factors leading to this aging population includes the improvements on living environment, life safety, and medical equipment. The rising of population age is not a negative phenomenon, and it requires the efforts of each individual governments and organizations to sustain the life of the elderly.

As the age of the population rises, governments and the international community have to pay more attention to supporting the elders with their needs, such as medical treatments, retirement programs, working opportunities, and leisure activities. Many governments are not able to afford the needs of all older people. For instance, in many countries resources needed for the quality lifestyle of elderly people, such as medical services and security equipment, are not enough to be given to all the elderly, as resources need to be distributed within the entire population. While governments seek to increase their assistance to the aging population, many societies do not respond with positive attitudes. Societies are concerned as the opportunity cost for the extra services provided to the elder population is the services that would have been provided to the rest of society. Numerous issues such as ageism and mistreatments to the elderly have already risen in response to the outrage of society.

Assisting and respecting an aging population is not only basic human virtue, but it is also closely related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The issue at hand covers goals
including No Poverty (SDG1), Good Health and Well-being (SDG3), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG8), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG11), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG16). In terms of an aging population, these SDGs aim to improve the lifestyle of elderly people by means such as concerning their economic status, addressing their health issues, and assisting them on social integration. As to achieve the SDGs, it is very important to treat the older persons as a vulnerable group, not to recognize them as burdens to society but instead “as the active agents of societal development,” and to protect the rights of all older persons.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Ageism**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age.” Ageism includes unfair treatments and views toward younger kids as well as older persons thus matters to the aging population. In regard to the current issue, many older persons have become victims of ageism in terms of employment and social services, and important to look for ways to combat ageism as approaching the solutions of this issue.

**Aging Population**

According to the UN, one in 11 people in the world has an age of or over 65 in 2019, and with this trend, there will be one in six people in the world over the age of 65 by 2050. The age of the global population has been rising in the past years, and it will continue to become an issue to the world. The aging population should not be treated as a negative phenomenon, and instead, countries should view older persons as a vulnerable group with their own dignity.

**Human Rights**

Universally, human rights refer to rights that belong to every human being regardless of “race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status”. Human rights ensure that people receive freedom, justice, dignity, and other rights. The freedom from torture, right to work, education, health, and social security, and more are all rights that should be guaranteed to all human beings.

**Poverty**

Poverty is the state of being unable to guarantee basic living needs due to the lack of income. According to UNDP, poverty is characterized by “income insecurity, malnutrition, poor health and
lack of access to clean water and sanitation, as well as adequate housing." Poverty is one of the common challenges faced by the elderly population.

**Sustainable Social and Financial Resources**

Sustainable social and financial resources for the aging population can be understood as sustainable assistances and better treatments to older persons. Examples of social and financial resources for older persons include pensions, social security and retirement homes.

**Background Information**

The trend of the global aging population has been rising for many years. The increasing aging population has become a relatively common issue around the world. To better promote the elder's right and fully accept the elderly in societies, there are a few societal issues that need to be solved by countries. Moreover, the elderly population faces various difficulties in the modern community. They suffer wrongful stereotypes and discrimination from society, and family's mistreatments. Cases of elder abuse exists everywhere in the world and many elderly people have lost their ability to work or even to take care of themselves. The younger generations often view them as burden thus neglecting these vulnerable groups of individuals and their contributions to society in the past. In fact, older persons are still capable of contributing and are crucial to the development of societies with vast wisdom and experiences they hold.

**Difficulties faced by older persons**

The older generations often face difficulties to be fully accepted by modern society despite their contributions of establishing the modern society and developing the different fields of industry. Many of the younger populations even consider the aged as burdens to society. Poverty and ageism are both common challenges that have violated the basic human rights of the elder people and prevented the elderly to further contribute to societal developments.

**Poverty**

Poverty is one of the most common threats of elderly people’s well being. Lack of job opportunities and the low wages for older individuals are major factors causing poverty amongst the aging population. The lack of familial care is also a common reason for poverty. Many elderly have been left alone in their shelters without any monetary support from their children. Families with fewer incomes usually view the older generation as an economic burden, and elderly people often require extra money in health care and living supplies.
Ageism

Elderly individuals often have to face negative stereotypes and discriminations from society. Societies form stereotypes such as “aging dulls wits” and “elders are less productive”. Some of the stereotypes exist, yet they only apply to a very small part of the elderly population. Many elderly individuals are discriminated by younger populations due to inaccurate stereotypes. Treating elders equally and protecting their basic human rights is one of the first steps to accept them in the society. Therefore it is very important for societies to fight for the rights and dignity of older people, and to combat ageism.

Challenges of an aging population

With the increase in the elder population, several issues have emerged among the community. Some of these issues are related to the treatment of older people, and some are societal-issues that can not be ignored.

Health care system

Health conditions such as hearing loss, cataracts, osteoarthritis, or other common diseases such as incontinence and Alzheimer’s disease usually accompany the aging of a person. With the increase in population age, more patients with the mentioned conditions are to be found around the world. For instance, Alzheimer’s disease affects at least five percent of people aged over 65, according to the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (NCBI). Many hospitals, however, are inadequate in providing aid to all elderly patients due to their lack of skills, personnel, and medical equipment. It is as well a difficult task for a country to provide more resources for the health care demands, because the more resources distributed to medical care, fewer resources could be used for other social needs. For the Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) it is even more difficult to supply extra health care resources to the elderly patients as many other parts of their population are also lacking in different types of resources.

Working population

The age working population is defined to be 15 to 64 years old according to the definition from OECD. Due to health conditions, a few parts of the aging population have lost their ability to work. The increase in the percentage of older persons in a country means that an increasing number of the population have lost their ability to work. Younger workers, or those who still have the ability to work, would have to work even harder in order to sustain the needs of each country. A data from OECD shows that between the years 2014 and 2018, 52.1 percent of the population between ages 55 to 64 are employed in France, in comparison to 80.6 percent of the population between ages 25 to 54. Similar data are shown for countries all around the world including Italy.
US, and Russia. The data indicates how people approaching older ages are less likely to be working compared to those in younger ages.

**Contributions of older persons to the development of societies**

The aging population should not be considered as burdens of societies. The vast knowledge and experiences they held would help them to contribute to society. In other words, elderly people are crucial for societal developments.

**Economic development**

With decades of social experiences and knowledge, older persons are making contributions to countries' economic developments. Many do so by participating in the countries' politics and continuing their work in the industry after retiring age. According to UNDP, older persons also play important roles in “taxes and consumption, and transfers of assets and resources to their families and communities. The increase in elderly people indicates that there are more experienced and knowledgeable individuals capable to work in the industries and contribute to economic developments.

**Volunteers**

Many older persons have become frequently involved in volunteering services after their retirements. Some volunteer to reduce environmental problems; some volunteer to educate younger generations with their vast amount of wisdom and life experiences; some even volunteer to take care of children and disabled persons. The contents of volunteering services may vary from picking up small garbage to serving as a librarian. Most of them are unpaid work. Through volunteering, the elderly will be able to maintain their body functions and improve their health status. Moreover, their actions will benefit the society as they provide their knowledge to set up a world for future generations. The elderly volunteers have been selflessly contributing to the well-being and development of society.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**Italian Republic**

Within the European Union (EU), Italy has the fastest aging population. In 2017, 29.4 percent of the Italian population is 60 years or older. The UNDP has estimated that 40.3 percent of the Italian population will reach or reach over 65 years old in year 2050. As the Italian population age is rising, the country's government has as well been taking measures that would support the elderly population. For instance, Italian government is willing to spend a relatively high amount of economic resources on
pensions. Italy is well-known for having the highest GDP from pensions out of the EU: “pensions take over 16% of Italy’s GDP, as compared to 11% for the rest of [EU].”

Japan

Japan is known for having one of the fastest aging populations. In 2017, 23.4 percent of the Japanese population is over the age of 60. In 2018, 28.4 percent of the population is 65 years or older. With this trend, UNDP has estimated that 42.4 percent of the Japanese population will be at or over the age of 60 in 2050. Over the years, the government of Japan has worked on finding solutions to the challenges created by the aging population. For instance, the New Angle Plan of 1999 and the Plus One Policy in 2009 are implemented to encourage families on giving birth to more children with the government's financial support on children’s supplies and education. In addition, Japan has encouraged older people that are able to work to continue working through various reforms on the Japanese pension systems.

World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO is a UN specialized agency that works to promote health and well being around the world. In relation to the issue at hand, the WHO has been working on creating environments suitable for elderly people to improve their physical and mental health and well-being. Furthermore, WHO works on assisting the ageing population with the health systems and long-term-care systems, for example sending trained workers, or having family members, to take care of elderly. These systems aim to provide health care to elder people that are in need and protect their rights and dignity.

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 10th, 1948</td>
<td>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights(UDHR) was proclaimed in A/RES/217(III). UNHR is “a milestone document in the history of human rights.” It lists out all human rights that should be protected universally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14th, 1990</td>
<td>The International Day of Older Persons is designated on the first day of October through GA resolution 45/106.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April, 2002</td>
<td>WHO published “Active Aging: a Policy Framework” to encourage the formation of active plans that will help promote healthy and active aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9th, 2012</td>
<td>UN resolution 66/127 designated the 15th of June as the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>The movie “Gloria” directed by Sebastian Lelio was released to the world. This</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
movie had led to worldwide conversations upon the roles of elder women in the society.

July 9th, 2019

HLPF 2019 Event on Confronting Ageism and Empowering Older People was held in the United Nations Headquarters to discuss on tackling ageism and empowering older persons and to point out the issues’ relations to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- HLPF 2019 Event on Confronting Ageism and Empowering Older People
- Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 9 January 2019 (A/RES/73/143)
- Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 17 January 2018 (A/RES/72/144)
- Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 20 January 2017 (A/RES/71/164)
- Towards a comprehensive and integral international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons, 13 February 2013 (A/RES/67/139)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health

The Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May, 2016 to promote healthy ageing and establish systems that will provide elderly with their needs. The WHO had worked on the five strategic priority areas: commit to action, age-friendly environments, health systems that meet the needs of older people, long-term-care systems, and data and research. WHO personnel have gone to different countries to provide technical support in developing relevant policies, develop training packages to reinforce professional and unprofessional caregivers, and practice other measures that would help promote health within the aging population.

Countries’ Policies

Many countries have been implementing policies to address the challenges accompanied by an aging population. Beside the measures taken by the Japanese and Italian governments that are
mentioned previously, other nations has as well been putting efforts in support of the aging population. For instance, in 2011 the Swedish government pledged a $617 million investment to improve elderly care. In 2012, the Bulgarian government encouraged people to work by raising the official retirement age by one year. More recently, the Canadian government introduced the SHIFT: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population that improves the life of older people.

Possible Solutions

Retirement Programs

Establishing or renewing countries’ retirement programs would be one of the major solutions to the issue at hand. A retirement program that consists of pensions, retirement homes, and other institutions for older persons would assist the elderly people to plan out their lives after retirement. Pensions, as one of the most common retiring treatments, are essential to every retiring elder. Many elderly people have to rely on pensions for the rest of their lives as they might face difficulty in earning money after their retirements. Retirement homes are not indispensable for the elderly, yet they will bring improvements to the life quality of older persons. Elderly living in retirement homes will always be secured by surrounding personnel, and they will be living and doing activities with similarly aged people. The establishment of retirement homes would help the aged population to gain back their dignity and human rights. To ensure that the retirement programs are created and provided to every retiring elder, country must have to sacrifice a portion of their resources from other social needs. Therefore it is as well important to consider an acceptable distribution of resources in each country.

Improving Public Health

Health is one of the most common issues upon the elderly population. With the need of various treatments, many countries need to shift a certain amount of resources to elderly’s health care. It is thus important to ensure that the elderly people maintain in good health. Working opportunities are important factors for a healthy lifestyle of elderly people. Elderly people will be able to keep their brain and body working through their jobs. Community service and volunteering works may as well provide exercise to the aging population, thus decreasing the threat of diseases and other health care conditions. Besides the elder people, it is as well an important task to promote and to ensure that people are receiving healthy lifestyle in younger ages. A healthy young individual would more likely to become a healthy old individual. Thus if healthy lifestyles can be promoted to the younger population, the occurrence of diseases and other health care conditions will decrease when the population grows older. Countries will, therefore, be able to distribute fewer resources for the aging population and to focus on other societal issues.
Bibliography


“Pension Funds Online.” Pension System in Japan - Pension Funds Online, <www.pensionfundsonline.co.uk/content/country-profiles/japan>.


**Appendix or Appendices**


V. The Contribution of Older Adults to their Families and Communities <https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/w3-key-findings-report/Chapter%202.pdf>.

VI. Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (WHO/NMH/NPH/02.8)