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Global Distributions of Older Population

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ABSTRACT

There are nearly 7.2 billion people on the planet. Out of these numbers, those aged 60 years and older is growing worldwide. Declining in birth and mortality rates seems to be the main contributors to this development. Life expectancy of general population has also increased, and thus the number of older population in society increased. Despite the fact that all nations in the world are experiencing the growth of older population, developed countries have a relatively large portion of this population in their population structure. The purpose of this article is to describe the growth of older population globally with particular emphasis on the proportion of older population over the years, distribution of older population, and rate of growth of this older population. Using a secondary data analysis, various sources related to older persons at international level are reviewed. This study highlights that the proportion of older population has increased, the older population has distributed unevenly, and the growth rate of older population is higher as compared to the growth of the total population globally.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years witnessed an increasing in number of the world population to nearly 7.2 billion. This development whether it is in developed or developing countries, the older populations also keep increasing very rapidly. Demographers and gerontologists view the phenomenon of the increasing of older population as a population ageing. As far as it can be traced, demographic records clearly show that the phenomenon of population ageing or demographic, as well as societal ageing in developed countries started to be seen as early as 1865. But it took about hundreds of years for developed countries to double their population aged 65 years and older. France, for instance, took 115 years from 1865 to 1980, and it took 85 years for Sweden from 1890 to 1975 to raise this population from 7% to 14% (Kinsella, 2007). In developing countries, by contrast, the population ageing has started to become a distinct phenomenon in the twenty-first century. What is being worried is that, even though this phenomenon is new, it will not take too long for developing countries to raise this population from 7% to 14%. Singapore, Colombia, Brazil, as well as Thailand will take only two or three decades to double their older population from 7% to 14% (Kinsella, 2007).

The present paper outlines the growing proportions of older population globally. Information on older population in this paper is a result of extensive readings on secondary sources from United Nations and other related sources. Through the study it is found that throughout the world the older person aged 60 years and older has been increasing very rapidly. Older person refers to a category of population that reach certain age in his/her developmental process. Before the 20th century not many people survive into old age that could be categorized as older person. At that time life expectancy of many people was very low. Today, life expectancy of the majority of the population is increasing. Coupled with the declining in birth as well as mortality rate, it resulted the increasing number and proportion of older population, a term used to refer to the population ageing. Until the early 1980s, most government of the developing countries tend to perceive that population ageing as an issue that concerned with developed countries only (Ogawa, 1992). Now the population ageing has become an international concern. Recognizing the number and percentage of older persons are increasing in all societies throughout the world, and the world population is ageing, United Nations has convened the World Assembly on Aging in Vienna in 1982 to raise public attention and those policymakers on the fact that all nations in the

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world are growing older, besides discussing issues resulting from the ageing of population (Ogawa, 1992). Through this assembly, the action plan, i.e the *Vienna International Plan of Action*, was agreed to be adopted to raise awareness of the government, policy makers, as well as individuals of all ages on the consequences of population ageing. Following the *Vienna International Plan of Action*, all countries are encouraged to give priority and pay serious attention on research related to older population. The Plan of Action, particularly recommended the followings:

"International exchange and research co-operation as well as data collection should be promoted in all fields having a bearing on aging, in order to provide a rational basis for future social policies and action. Special emphasis should be placed on comparative and cross-cultural studies on aging. Interdisciplinary approaches should be stressed (United Nations, 1982)"

Thus, the process and consequences of the ageing of population have received worldwide attention, including Malaysia. At regional level, countries in Asia and the Pacific in a conference, i.e *the Third Asian and Pacific Population Conference* held in Colombo in 1982, call upon all states members to increase awareness on the implication of the ageing of population, including to increase research efforts on the implication of population ageing in society as well as to explore alternative approach for the maintainance of the welfare of older persons, family as well as community. *The International Conference on Population* (1984) also stated that the ageing of population has become an important issue for developed countries, and following the declining in fertility rate in this region, it will also become an important issue for developing countries as well. The conference recomended several steps to be taken by countries to analyze the issue of population ageing, particularly its implication on development, social service, health maintainance and related implication (United Nations, 1987). In an atempt to raise awareness of the governments and individuals on the implications of the ageing of population, *the Second World Assembly on Aging* was held in Madrid in 2002. United Nations has also adopted the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Data presented in the present paper utilize the existing records, particularly secondary data analysis as its main devices. Secondary data analysis refers to any technique that describes a reanalysis of data produced by someone else for other purpose (Kart, 1990). From secondary analysis conducted, a wide range of published materials that have been collected and published by other researchers are analyzed. Most of the data are taken from United Nations (various years), Kinsella and Teuber (1993), Kinsella and Wan He (2009), as well as various sources related to older persons in Asia and the Pacific. Data from *Population Ageing in Asia, Asian Population Studies Series No. 108* (United Nations, 1991) are also important elements. Through these secondary materials, some important information on older person globally has been reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Proportion of Older Persons:

Over the years the older population is growing globally. According to one estimation (United Nations, 1991) there were 7.1% population aged 65 years and older in the entire world in 2005. As the world has 7% or more population aged 65 years and older in 2005, the entire world is said to be getting the status of aged society in that year. United Nations categorized a society as an aged one when its population aged 65 years and older in the population structure amounting 7% or more (Masitah dan Nazileh 1988).

Population ageing is a by-product of the process known as demographic transition. The process of population ageing is primarily determined by fertility rate as well as mortality rate, where population with high fertility tend to have low proportions of older persons and vise versa (Kinsella and Teuber, 1993). As every country has been in different stage of demographic transition, the proportions of older person differ significantly across countries. Demographic transition occurred in developed countries due to the declining in birth rates, coupled with declining in mortality rates that started in the eighteenth century, promotes an increasing of older persons worldwide. Developed countries generally, in a more advanced stage of the demographic transition and thus, their proportions of older persons are projected to remain significantly higher than the proportions in the less developed regions over the next several decades (United Nations, 2002b). In European countries, the birth rate has been diminishing since the mid 1960s, and in a number of them, fertility have decreased to a level well below replacement (Troisi, 1995).

At the global level, while Europe is the world's major area with the highest proportions of older persons, Africa was the lowest (United Nations, 2002). In 1950 there were only 127 million older population aged 65 years and older throughout the world. In 1970, the number increased to 200 million, and increased further to 424 million in 2000. It is projected that there will be 828 million older population aged 65 years and older in 2025. It took almost 30 years for the world to reach 6.0% from 5.0% of older persons aged 65 years and older, while it only took 10 years to move from 6.0% to 7.0%, or from 7.0% to 8.0% (Table 1).

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Table 1: Distribution of World Older Persons Aged 65 Years and Older: 1950-2025 (000).

Year	World		Developed		Developing	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1950	127 808	5.1	63 566	7.6	64 242	3.8
1960	160 067	5.3	80 250	8.5	79 817	3.8
1970	200 137	5.4	101 007	9.6	99 120	3.7
1980	263 986	5.9	130 858	11.5	133 129	4.0
1990	327 633	6.2	145 614	12.1	182 018	4.5
2000	424 516	6.8	172 820	13.7	251 696	5.0
2005	475 952	7.1	185 644	14.4	290 319	5.3
2015	597 804	7.8	210 735	15.9	387 136	6.1
2025	828 164	9.7	257 028	19.0	571 136	8.0

Sources: Population Ageing in Asia, Asian Population Studies Series No. 108, United Nations, 1991

Distribution of Older Persons:

Population ageing has undoutebly become a distinct demographic phenomenon in developed countries. But what is not widely known is that developing countries are ageing as well, and often at a more rapid rate than in other developed countries (Kinsella and Teuber, 1993). Eighty-one percent of the world's net gain of older persons aged 65 years and older from July 2007 to July 2008 occured in developing countries. At the global level, the number of older persons aged 65 years and older in 1980 has been 263 million. The world now has a luxury of ageing. The number will increase to 828 million in 2025. In that year, it is estimated that there will be one older persons aged 65 years and older in every seven world population (Myers, 1985). In terms of percentage, from the whole population, there were 7.6% older persons aged 65 years and older in developed countries in 1950, while it was 3.8% in developing countries. In 1970, the percentage was increased to 9.6% in developed countries, while 3.7% in developing countries. While developed countries as a whole had been categorised as an aged society since 1950, developing countries as a whole will only be categorised as an aged society around 2020 when its older population aged 65 years and reach older by 7.0%.

The majority of the increasing of older population today has been in developing countries. According to United Nations (1988), the population aged 65 years and older in 2000 was 402.9 million. From this figure 166.0 million resided in developed countries, while 236.9 million in developing countries. In 2025, the number of older persons aged 65 years and older will be 760.6 million, and about 230.3 million will be in developed countries, while developing countries sheltered 530.4 million of the aged populations. According to United Nations (2001), developing countries is a home for the majority of older persons. In 1950 older persons aged 65 years and older constituted only 49.0% in advanced countries, while 51.0% resided in developing countries. In 2000 developed countries have sheltered about 40.7% of older persons as compared to 59.3% in developing countries. Developing countries will remain the home for the majority of the world older populations, and 80% of this populations will be resided in developing countries in 2050 (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of World Older Populations Aged 65+: 1950 – 2050.

Regions	1950	1975	2000	2025	2050
Developed Countries	49.0	48.7	40.7	31.5	21.
Developing Countries	51.0	51.3	59.3	68.5	78.3
World	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: United Nations (2001)

Growth Rates of Older Persons:

The world's population is now ageing at an unprecedented rate (Kinsella and Wan He, 2009). It was estimated that older population is growing faster than the total population in all regions of the world (United Nations, 2002). After the year 2010, the proportions of older person, especially the oldest old, will rise rapidly in most developed and many developing countries (Kinsella and Teuber, 1993). United Nations (Kinsella, 2007) has estimated that between 2005 – 2030, the percentage of change in population globally for all ages is 27%, but for the aged 65+ is 104%, while those aged 85+ and 100+ is estimated to be 151% and 431% respectively. In 1950, as estimated by United Nations (2002a), there were 205 million persons aged 60 years and older in the world. At that time only 3 countries had more than 10 million people aged 60 years and older, namely China (42 million), India (20 million), and the United States of America (20 million).

In 2000, the number of this population has increased to 606 million, and in that year, the number of countries with more than 10 million has increased to 12, including 5 countries had more than 20 million older persons, namely China (129 million), India (77 million), the United States of America (46 million), Japan (30 million), and the Russian Federation (27 million). It is projected that there will be nearly 2 billion people aged 60 years and older in 2050, and 33 countries are expected to have more than 10 million older people aged 60 years and older, including 5 countries with more than 50 million older people, namely China (437 million),

India (324 million), the United States of America (107 million), Indonesia (70 million), and Brazil (58 million). The annual growth rate of older persons has also increased significantly. In the period 1950 – 1955, the annual growth rate globally was 1.8%, only slightly higher than the annual growth rate for total population. Currently, the annual growth rate of the total population is 1.2% while for older persons is 1.9%. The difference between the two rates is expected to become larger (United Nations, 2002).

Conclusion:

This present paper discussed the growth of older population globally. In recent years the number of older persons aged 60 years and older is growing worldwide. The world's population is now aging at an unprecedented rate. Demographic transition occurred all over the world has promoted an increasing of older person worldwide. In terms of demographic transition, it was discussed that developed countries as a whole has completed their demographic transition, and thus have high proportions of older population compared to developing countries. As every country in developing countries is now at different stage of demographic transition in which birth and death rates have fallen substantially, the process of population ageing is not an evently process, and thus, the proportions of older population differ significantly across countries. But population ageing that has long been started in developed countries will be soon become a distinct demographic phenomenon in developing countries as well. Thus, very soon we will be living in an ageing world where at that time there will be more older people in society than the younger ones.

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