
Social, Economic and Health Status of Aging People in Surrounding Areas of Kathmandu

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Abstract

Aging is most recent phenomenon of the world population- none of the countries in the world is excluded from this spectacle. The aging of population in Nepal is growing in acceleration comparing to other segments of human population. As population transition shifts to the aging, it brings changes in social pattern, social structure and social relations. This article brings into discussion about various aspects of socio-economic status of aging people in Nepal, based on outer circle of Kathmandu city. Socio-economic status of aging people is more or less associated with the socio-economic status of family itself and, of course, of a country. Aging is not only associated with age, but also intermingled with various socio-economic factors of different arena of a society. Researches on concerned field has explored that increase of aging population pose challenges to family, society and nation. Moreover, aging people are at the risk because of individual, behavioral and surrounding factors that include level of education, past and present occupation, level of income, youth migration, accessible infrastructure, provisions of social security and many more that is discussed in the following lines. Such and other factors contribute for health risks in aging. In this scenario, this paper accounts socio-economic status of aging people in Nepal in the present context.

Keywords: *Aging, Population, Socio-economic Status, Role, Healthiness, Wellbeing, Risk*

Introduction

People's life is possessed by a process of gradual change of physical appearance and mental situation (Gurung, Paudel, & Yadav, 2016) that also brings changes in social patterns, structure and relations. Aging of the individual is socio-cultural (Jensen, 1958) phenomena of human population in the twenty-first century (Ossewaarde, 2014; Saroha, 2018). Aging of the population has been increasing beyond any expectations comparing to any time in history (UN, 2015) and the concern of all the countries of the world. It is an emerging issue and a relative concept as there is no uniformity in setting a boundary line of aging (MOPE, 2016). The World Assembly on aging has adopted that the population aged or over 60 as aging (Brightman & Chalise, 2006; Shrestha, 2012); however, some industrialized countries consider aging to the human population, who has crossed 65 years of their biological age (Hooyman, Kawamoto, & Kiyak, 2015). Senior Citizen Acts of Nepal (2006) refers aging people as senior citizens with the age sixty years or above.

Senior Citizen Acts (2006) of Nepal accounts aging people as dependent population by associating them retired and having no any source of income and need to be tended and cared for

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by other family members-providing the provision of food, clothes, shelter, social service, amusements, and other basic necessary things. So far, the government of Nepal has been implementing the provision of social security on monthly basis since fiscal year 1994/95 to aging people aged of 75 and over. From the fiscal year 2021/22 aging people aged of 70 and over are receiving four thousand Nepalese rupees on monthly basis for the independence, social protection and economic self-sufficiency; the eligible age to receive non-contributory pension has been decreased to 68 years from the fiscal year 2022/23.

Aging has become the concern of everyone and every country as it has been the major characteristics of human population. The accelerating rate of aging population is higher in developing countries like Nepal comparing with developed countries, which basically have already settled down this issue (Marmot, 2005; Saroha, 2018). It has been more challenging to state organizations of the developing and middle-income countries (Saito, Kai, & Chalise, 2010). According to the national census of Nepal (2011), about 8.1 percent of the total population is covered by aging people.

In Nepal, immediate family members, especially sons and their families are expected to care and nurture to aging people (Saito, Kai, & Chalise, 2010), but depletion in family size and youth migration in and out of the country has been increasing challenges in the management of aging people in family circle, and government is so poor to take entire responsibility of aging people. However, nation and society give leaves to the aging people by separating them from all kinds of social roles by calling it an age of retirement. Thus, they are disengaged in society; change in social roles as people advance into aging contribute in losing close relationships with friends, families and works, which also pose threats in their health, wellbeing and happiness.

Researches, which have done in the recent past has disclosed that the aging people are at the risk of many individuals, behavioral and environmental factors that include occupation, level of income, the level of education they have attended, pollution, accessible infrastructure, physical activities consumption of alcohol and tobacco, etc. Those are contributing for health risks in aging (UN, 2015). From the prospects of health and wellbeing, aging is supplementary with damage of cells that weakens the immune system and reduces bodily capacity that ultimately hosts for many chronic diseases (Higgs & Jones, 2009; Shrestha, 2012; Niccoli & Partridge, 2012). In this context, this paper accounts the status of healthiness and wellbeing of aging people in Kathmandu, who are receiving old-age pension from the government of Nepal.

Methods and Materials

This research paper is prepared on fresh-handed primary data from the fieldcollected by the author of this articlepersonally. The author was visited 45 people aged over seventy years, living in ward number ten of the *Budhanilakantha* Municipality out of its 13 different consecutive unites, belonging to Kathmandu district, the capital district of Nepal, and interviewed them personally based on semi-structured interview check-list. Additional information was collected from their family members and close relatives.The data was collected as a process of preparation of Masteral Dissertation of this author during from November of 2019 to February of 2020.

The area is the part of newly developed residential area in Kathmandu following people's revolt 2006 A. D. The place is constituted with residential diversity- Caste/Ethnicity, Ethnic Groups,

Sexual-orientation, Religion, Dalits with rural-urban dichotomy, covering both migrated and long-time living localities. The researcher also discovered people with different socio-economic, educational, occupational and household diversity.

The sample was taken by employing simple random sampling from among 317 people receiving non-contributory pension from the government of Nepal (*Budhanilakantha Municipality Profile 2075/76*). The sample covers 14.20 percent of the sampling frame with a 70.31 response rate. In addition, secondary data has taken from different books, journals, census, surveys, periodic papers, reports and governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies.

Acceleration of Aging and Their Social Status

Aging is a social process that links with the change in biological appearances. Growth of aging populations results different consequences. Old age persons or population has significant social, political, and economic implications (Saroaha, 2018); though such implications are different in accordance with socio-economic variations among countries. can be varied according to social and economic development of the nations. Situation which developing countries facing today are totally different then the scenario faced by the industrialized countries in the past. Developing countries can learn from the experience of the developed countries, though their social, cultural, and demographic characteristics could be different. Nepal can learn from these experiences which developed countries have already experienced, but their experience and our present situation cannot be exactly the same.

Trends of Aging Demography in Nepal

Aging of population is the natural process of demographic transition (Saroaha, 2018) and most recent feature of human population (Shrestha, 2012), in all the countries of the world, as well as the key feature of the population of Nepal. Changing demographic transition brings change in social patterns, social structures and social relationships. Aging is a segment of human population aged sixty and over in the context of developing countries like Nepal; however, some industrialized countries consider aging as post sixty-five years phenomenon. Aging of population is a matter of concern to almost all the counties of the world as this section of the population is increasing gradually.

Table No.01- Transition of Aging Population 1961-2011

Population Census Year	Total Population	Total Aging Population	Increased Aging Population	Increased Percentage	Percentage of Aging People	Growth rate of Aging People
1961	9,412,996	489,346	NA	NA	5.2	1.79
1971	11,555,983	621,597	132,251	27.0	5.4	2.42
1981	15,022,839	857,061	235,464	37.9	5.7	3.26
1991	18,491,097	1,071,234	214,173	25.0	5.8	2.26
2001	23,151,423	1,504,311	433,077	40.4	6.5	3.4
2011	26,494,504	2,154,410	650,099	43.2	8.1	NA

Source: National Population Censuses of Nepal 1961-2011

According to statistical data taken from national census of Nepal, there has been aging mobility in high acceleration in both in rate and structure. As it has mentioned earlier, Nepal has been continuously contributing in increasing population size and structure 1950s onwards. Only, after 1991 demography of the nation has begun to decline slowly. Nepal is on the way of pick the transition of aging population as inevitable and unstoppable journey as a consequence of the final stage of the population transition. Now, the country has crucial role of aging management through adequate plans, policies and programs.

Education in Association with Occupation and Income

It is aggregable fact that the education holds major contribution to society as an especially important social institution and tool of socialization. Educational institutions contribute to operating society in so many ways. An educational institution teaches cultural values and norms as well as skills to the young people to succeed in their life, provides an opportunities and platform for learning and research, gives an opportunity for the social network, and underpin for social placement (Macionis, 2018). Education and literacy are important routes to sound economic development (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2017). It is a key variable that can contributes and effects on many other areas of personal and social life. Education is the key factor that allows opening multiple life-chances in society. Level of educational attainment determines people's socio-economic status with job status, level of income as well as health and wellbeing of people. Education contributes to social stability. Level of education is an important dimension of social stratification (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2017) as well. However, we have discovered that more than two-third of the respondents has, really, low level of educational attainment.

However, the research has discovered that all women respondents are 100% illiterate in the country, which means zero level of educational attainment. They have not had any option in life outside of housework. Among men only 41.67% are illiterate; other 58.38% (the majority of men) were found literate, though the level of educational attainment is not the same for every man; over 25% of men were found to have higher educational status (university-level educational attainment); about 8.34% of men were found with university degrees. Aging people with upper-level of education discovered advanced in all social indexes. For example, they had a higher job status, higher level of income, higher in socio-

economic and health status and living with higher social prestige, which surely is affecting in their quality aging.

Importance of Good Economic Status in Aging

Economy is the most important for all, in every stage of life, operating individual, and societal life, shaping society's economic activities, notably related to manufacturing, supply and consumption of goods and services which ensures people's survival and shapes their everyday life (Macionis, 2018). People participate in economic activities with their involvement in buying and selling commodities and services. Economic gain and loss affect individual, society, nation-states. People's economic status depends on many other social factors, like educational attainment, job status, age, working capacity, etc. Income is the way of personal or family's wealth too.

Aging people are believed to have at a greater risk of poverty if they are not a part of retirement program or the provision of the contributory pension system. Aging is associated with the decrease of working capacity, self-care, active living, and increase dependency. Income and poverty in aging people shapes by multiple factors: gender, race, life chances, educational attainment, etc. (Lowsky, Olshansky, Bhattacharya, & Goldman, 2014). Numerous field studies show that the poverty rate is higher in aging people compared to people of other aged groups for multiple reasons: first and foremost, they get retired from jobs. Secondly, they may have handover their familial property to younger generations of the family. Thirdly, there can have drop holes in aging (Khanal 2022).

Senior Citizen act of Nepal (2006) brought provision of immediate action of protection and social security of aging people. Though, non-contributory pension system has been announced by the government of Nepal, it is necessary for all state stakeholders to arrange all the requirements in health, nutrition, clothing as well as shelter for aging people in Nepal instead of giving a certain amount in monthly basis. Monthly basis social security is not enough for their basic livelihood.

The past occupation as well as area of origin for migrants plays vital roles in socio-economic status of a person, especially in aging. The most of the research participants are to be migrated from rural areas of settlement. Basically, their past occupation was subsistence-based agrarian and farming. In addition, 68.89% of respondents have very low or zero levels of educational attainment and have very

low or no savings form the past. Most of them have handed over their property to the children when they became old, especially to sons and having no personal regular income. Poverty as looking as a dependent variable, strongly associated with educational attainment, occupation, job status, income level, and so forth. That is why it can be asserted that the 50% of the aging people have the prevalence of the risk of poverty in Kathmandu, especially those who have migrated from the village and living outer-ring of the Kathmandu city.

Adverse Effects of Depletion of Family Size and Youth Migration in Aging

Family is a kind of permanent social institution, composed of parents and children, found in all societies that unite people with love and care (Macionis, 2018). Family denotes to the group of people which are tied with familial linkage (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2017). Families are formed around, performs a vital task, and one of the many agents of socialization, reproduction, child-rearing, and the institution to raise citizens of the state, for it is, societies are built on families. Model and ideal families are very much helpful in sustaining strong society and further nation state. It is none other than the families that provides modality for the strong society. Family functions help society operate smoothly, maintain kingship organizations and property rights, regulates sexual relationship, gives society to new generations, and provides emotional and materialsupports (Macionis, 2018). Family also serves as an important constituent as it supplies basic ingredients in addition with supplying other social institutions and practices (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum, & Carr, 2017).

Traditionally, family has been considered as strong social security in aging in all kinds of society. It used to have a family's responsibility, especially the son (s), to rare and care for senior member (s) of the family (Limbu, 2012) and is considered as eminent social security in aging (Saito, Kai, & Chalise, 2010). However, change in family system and migration of young and adult member (s) of the family has affected negatively in the security of aging or their caring and raring in proper way (Gautam, 1999), especially in the Nepalese context, from where millions of younger generations seeking career opportunities across the national border.

The traditional family relationship has been changing gradually as people have to sustain and are competing with the market economy. In Nepal, it is identified that

significant proportion of aging people are in solitude (Saito, Kai, & Chalise, 2010). It is thus, the strong flow of in and out migration of the country. Still today, the significant number of aging people are subsisting by their children in the country. Statistics shows that a significant number of aging people are living with their son, comprised of 53.3% of respondents; they are more than half of the respondents. In addition, 24.4% of research participants found living with their daughters' families. This shows the major shift (social change) in Nepali society, because it was very hard to discover parents in their aging living with their daughter and son in law in very recent past and that has been becoming normal practice in today's Nepalese society. Depletion of family size and youth migration in and out of the country has been increasing challenges in the management of aging people in family circle, and government is not much capable to take entire responsibility of aging people. One of the most ironical facts is that the nation and society give leaves to the aging people by separating them from all kinds of social roles by calling it an age of retirement. Aging people who are living without any security support from the family have pretty much difficulty in managing their livelihood.

Gender and Aging

Men and women work as a different part of the social system, many separated but integrated parts; it is the way to organize society together (Macionis, 2018). Sex refers to the biological distinction between male and females, whereas gender is a social relationship between the biological sex of being male and female (Luintel, 2006); it refers to socio-cultural distinctions associated with male or female (Little & McGivern, 2013). Gender relations are patterned by uneven dispatch of prestige, power, privilege and wealth among men and women (Macionis, 2018). Gender defines a historically shaped pattern of the men-women relationship, because it has filled with inequality, domination, and subordination, and considered as an important dimension of social stratification in all types of society. The attitude of gender roles, that link biological sex into different role location in society, still exists in Nepali society. Moreover, "beauty myth" in contemporary society damages women, trying to please men and avoid challenging the power that they are holding. Men-women relationship in society should not be derived through the sexual division of labor and the organization of labor in society.

Women had backward status in every sector of society as a result of their lower or nil in educational attainment. This reflects historically shaped unequal pattern of men -women relationship. They found socially back winded. It was social mechanism, led by men to keep their domination for long-lasting. We have found that our society is not only unfriendly to women, but also it is not human-friendly. Men-women relationship has been filled with inequality, domination, and subordination both historically and culturally (Luintel, 2006). Talking about the relationship with property, we still can find the reflectivity of inequality in men-women relationship in the country. Only about 9.52% of women have found holding their property rights and opportunities among respondents found in research area. It is also discovered that about 33.33% of male respondents hold property rights (ownership over property); it means one person in three, either as a husband or a son holds property rights in the family. Widow women are found to have neglected by their son and most of them are living either with a daughter or separated from the family and living outside of home. In fact, we found that among research participants, 61.90% of women are widow, when only 16.67% of their male counterparts are experiencing widowhood. In the case of handling social security income, 38.09% of aged women do not handle it; their family, either a husband or a son or daughter or daughter in law do it, whereas 100% of their male respondents handle social security income by themselves.

Changing Livelihood Strategy Forced Aging People in Loneliness

Migration has been the global phenomenon and central ideals of a human being in all throughout history (UN, 2015) and it has been accelerating more in the twenty-first century. People prefer to move one place to another with different intentions- whether it can be the purpose of settlement, job, and education, temporarily or permanently. People have a trend to migrate from the places, where there are fewer options and opportunities in life to the places with multiple options and opportunities are granted. In the current world flow of migration has been from rural to urban areas and from underdeveloped region to developed regions. Nepal has been facing the seasonal type of migration as well; they do migrate temporarily for a few years for job opportunities. Migration has caused to raise problem in aging people in both rural and urban areas, particularly in rural areas of the country (Gautam, 1999). As a result of migration, multiple effects have been placed to the aging people in Nepal. People are migrated from rural areas of Nepal and came to live in the cities, and in Kathmandu, but still many of

them are living alone or with daughter in law as sons went to work abroad or even different districts of Nepal for their job placement.

As the country of Nepal has been facing challenges of internal and external exodus in increasing ratio in the last four decades or more for better opportunities and life chances; this has created more problems in old age people in their localities, because there are no much young people, especially in rural areas of the country. We can see high mobility in Nepalese society. It is overviewed that most of the families (97% of them who are included in the sample) have migrated from different hills and some of them are migrated from plain land of *Tarai*, too.

Most of the elderly people have their children abroad whether in developed or developing countries of intermediate economic growth. Old age people are gratified to live alone in their residence. They are destined to look after empty homes with the gazing eyes on the street in hoping meeting and return of their children (Gautam, 1999). As young, their adult and older adult children became habitual in living in a new environment. It is easy for them if his/her spouse, in most cases, accompanied with them. In addition, they are busy people, as they engage in their work, they do not feel loneliness. Migration also has become the strong cause of the depletion of family relations.

The Provision of Social Security in Aging

An income support scheme in old age is crucial for independence and economic self-sufficiency, as for large segment of aging people are associated with dependency and vulnerability in aging (UN, 2015). Such right is granted to aging people based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-1966, promulgated by the United Nations. In addition, need of ensuring social protection for the least standard of living for dependent population reflected in 2030 agendas for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015). Following such obligatory provisions Nepal is one among many other middle- and low-income countries to long-drawn-out the coverage of the non-contributory pension system in addition to already existed contributory pension system.

Government of Nepal has begun a provision of old age allowance to aging people aged over 75 years, from the fiscal year 2052/53 B. S.; recipients used to receive 100 NRS and has increased by the time. In fiscal year 2076/77 B. S., the provision of old age allowance (old age allowance) giving to the aging people

has increased to 4000 NRS, and given to those aged and over 70. From the fiscal year 2079/080 the age has been dropped down to 68 years, who will be eligible to receive non-contributory pension, which is very important but not enough to manage basic coverage of extremely necessary things of daily living as well as health related provision of recipients. Some of the respondents with good economic background do not need such provision; in fact, the NRS. 4,000 is nothing for them, but they still receive it and give it away to the needy people in society; however, some people are extremely needed it, just to maintain daily living. It is recommended that the government is needed to set up basic norms based on their social locations on the basis of economy.

This research has conducted on aging people, who receive old-age allowance form the government, however among respondents 97.8% of them continuously receiving their old age allowance form ward administrative office (a unit of local government) located in *Akashedhara*, remaining 2.2% respondents do not receive such provision; for them it is not required for them. They have responded that they do not need such allowance; it will do nothing for them. One respondent deliberately expressed his feeling, "Well I do not go to receive old age allowance, because I do not need it; even though I receive it, what I will do with such small money! Rather I earn it from my own business."

Aging people have responded that they are happy with the provision of old-age allowance that they are receiving. It is very helpful for them as well. Where do they expense the income from old age allowance? Most of them (55.6%) [among receivers) respondents have replied that they are using such income in household and to buy necessary food, 13.3% of them are using this income to buy medicine and fruits, 4.4% of them are using this income in social services, 20% of them are using it in worship and offering and 6.7% of respondents are giving it to the family, especially to son. The significant number of research participants, 76.3%, has responded that old age allowance that the government has been giving to aging people is not enough. Only 13.2 percent of people in the sample have responded that it is enough for them. From the field survey, it has found that many people in aging are in a vulnerable situation; In fact, most of them are in critical situation that they need to support their medical supplements as well as household supplies. Some of the old age grandmothers even do not know the real amount they receive as their old age allowance from the government.

Aging people are the part of society; they must sustain and adopt themselves in society they are living, but society must make environment for aging people to be

adjusted; so that they can naturally transit to death from the role less situation. The government should extend its helping hands for aging people's livelihood and wellbeing. The government of Nepal, now, has placed old age allowance to the people aged over sixty-eight. There are some people in society who are in the position to serve other. It is not mandatory and important to them. However, the socio-economic situation of all aging people is not the same. The government should take overall responsibility for aging people so that they can live securely, but without any scarcity.

Conclusion

After the second half of the twentieth century, we have been gradually stepping into aging society, where above twenty percent of the world population is being turned to their old age. More than 8.1 percent of Nepali population was covered by aging people as of the national census 2011. As a result of birth and death control backed by modern medicine as an important social institution and scientific invention and increase in life expectancy at birth number of aging populations has been growing in the country and the world. This paper brings some facts regarding aging people in Nepal, who currently, have been becoming the victim of socio-cultural change, as well as change coming in social structure and the social relationship. It is very crucial now, as the demand of change, the role of aging people is now need to be redefined.

In the last few decades, especially after the year 1991, a glimpse of change has begun to enter in Nepal- western values system called modernization entered in Nepali society. People began to see new possibilities in the life beyond their territory. Change coming to the traditional family system has affected the aging people most in Nepal. In the old value system, children used to have considered security in old age. Old age people have found no preparation for aging life except giving birth to a son (or many), with hope and believe that he/ they will be their social security in aging life. Now, children have begun to follow opportunities rather than caring parents. Country like Nepal with weak in policy formation and implementation lacks proper aging friendly plans and policies. Old age allowance that government is providing, NRS 4,000/- on monthly basis as the non-contributory pension is like ghee on the sand; it has not and cannot become the substance of words "independence, economic self-sufficiency, and social protection" (of what government is saying) of aging people.

Aging people in Nepal are now feeling of inadequate social role given to them. As a country in transition, young people want to quickly replace aging people from their social roles and responsibility, but aging people are in a position to increase their superannuation age. But still, Nepal has nothing to do with superannuation age limit, since only 19% of people are estimated to have involved in service sectors. Some private service sector does not provide a contributory pension. Most of the people in aging rely on non-contributory pension (old age allowance), which is not adequate to cover the policy of the provision.

Old age is associated with the prevalence of diseases, death and disability. People in age take leave from all productive roles before they completely collapse and no longer be able to perform their roles in society and make vacant room for younger generation workers, who are more skillful, capable, and have both bodily and mental power to perform their social roles in society. Such disengagement is also an opportunity for aging people to get leave from their job and enjoy pursuing their hobbies. However, as people's life expectancy is increasing and number of births are decreasing, compulsory retirement age can be extended further. It is also recommended that the social institutions should be developed as required for old age.

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