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Topic: Socio-Economic and Health Status of Elderly: A Case Study of Rohtak District, Haryana

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Abstract

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Improved health, increased access to education, and economic growth has led to lower fertility rates and longer life expectancy in every region and across socioeconomic groups. While this shift represents a major global success story, aging populations also present challenges to families, communities, and countries. This demographic shift is unprecedented in world history, and is most likely irreversible.

Until recently, population ageing was seen as a phenomenon occurring mainly in the developed countries of Europe and North America. It is now recognised that while both developed and developing countries are experiencing growing proportions of elderly, developing countries currently are ageing faster than developed countries. The proportion of older persons in the more developed regions was much higher compared to the 8 per cent in developing regions. However, both groups are expected to have vastly increased proportions in the near future (33 per cent and 20 per cent respectively in 2050) with as many as 1,592 million older persons in developing regions.

There is no United Nations standard numerical criterion, but the UN agreed cutoff is 60+ years when referring to the elderly population (WHO). The 'elderly' group in a population is defined in terms of the proportion of person aged 60 years and above in the total population. Elderly population is an obvious consequence of the process of demographic transition.

Government of India adopted 'National Policy on Older Persons' in January, 1999. The policy defines 'senior citizen' or 'elderly' as a person who is of age 60 years or above.

Ageism has been described as “thinking or believing in a negative manner about the process of becoming old or about old people”. Although each society has attitudes and beliefs about ageing that are embedded in the culture, negative responses to ageing are prevalent.

Gerontology is a scientific study of aged persons. It is not only multi-dimensional in its nature but also it includes: physical and social sciences. Encyclopedia Britannica specifies its three aspects, such as longevity, ageing and death. The term ‘Ageing’ is a wider term and can be studied from three different dimensions: biological, psychological and socio-cultural. The Concept of ageing and old age are closely related. The old age is a static notion, while the ageing is a dynamic one. It refers to a sequence of changes across a life span of an individual.

In India, the proportion of the population aged 60 years and above was 7 per cent in 2009 (88 million) and is expected to increase to 20 per cent (315 million) by the year 2050. In absolute numbers, the elderly population in 2009 was approximately 88 million and is expected to sharply increase to more than 315 million by 2050. The more developed states in the southern region and a few others like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra have experienced demographic transition ahead of others and therefore are growing older faster than other states. Certain regions, primarily in the central and eastern parts of the country, still have high fertility and mortality levels, and therefore, younger population age structures. While improvement in health, decline in fertility, and increase in longevity are desirable, the projected increase of elderly population over the next few decades is a development concern that warrants priority attention for economic and social policies to become senior citizen-friendly