



Population Aging of Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges

Aminur Rahman¹

Recent data suggest that Bangladesh is rapidly transitioning to an ageing society, driven by decreased fertility and rising life expectancy. By 2024-2025, the population aged 60 and up is expected to be 15 to 16.5 million, accounting for roughly 10% of the overall population.¹ This figure is expected to reach 40 million by 2050, accounting for around 19-22% of the entire population. Bangladesh's population is rapidly aging, with forecasts showing that by 2050, one in every five persons would be above the age of sixty.² Life expectancy will rise to more than 80 years by 2050. Bangladesh's population is aging quickly; by 2100, there will be 65 million old people living there.³ The older population in Bangladesh has traditionally depended on unpaid care from family members; therefore this change is creating difficulties for established care organizations.

An aging population brought on by longer life expectancies and declining birth rates poses significant policy difficulties, including strained public budgets from rising healthcare and pension expenditures, a declining workforce, and an increase in the need for long-term care. Raising retirement ages, encouraging lifelong learning for older people, changing healthcare systems to give priority to chronic care, and enacting fiscal reforms to guarantee long-term sustainability are the

primary policy answers.⁴ Many of the major morbidities that contribute to the aging issue are not largely social, but rather the outcome of underlying nutritional disorders and vulnerabilities that older persons carry into old age and then increase.

With the implementation of the Old Age Allowance (OAA) and the National Policy for Older Persons (2013), policymakers are paying more attention to this demographic transition. However, there are still issues with funding, coverage, and the requirement for all-encompassing health and social care.⁵ The primary program is the Old Age Allowance (OAA) program, which was introduced in 1998 and gives older people who are vulnerable and impoverished means-tested allowances.⁶ The elderly population is more likely to experience health problems, poverty, and limited access to healthcare, especially in rural areas. Physical constraints are common among older persons, and they often require improved accessibility, such as high-commode toilets, which are uncommon. In an effort to give older persons a more inclusive, respectable, and secure existence, the government has recognized this trend and is revising the National Policy for Older Persons (2012) to address the need for improved social safety nets, geriatric care, and financial stability.⁷ In order to address the social, economic, and health issues related to this expanding population and guarantee that older individuals in Bangladesh may live with dignity, more comprehensive policies are desperately needed, even though there are measures in place.

The main issues include widespread neglect, the deterioration of conventional family support networks, insufficient specialist healthcare, and poor financial security. Access to healthcare is

1. Professor and Head, Dept. of Neurology, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh.

Correspondence: Prof. Dr. Aminur Rahman, Professor and Head, Dept. of Neurology, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh, E-mail: draminur@yahoo.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9261-7734>.

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severely hampered by a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (diabetes, hypertension) and impairments as well as a dearth of geriatric medical facilities. Due to the limited coverage of formal social safety nets like the Old Age Allowance (OAA), the majority of older individuals lack formal pensions or enough savings, which results in poverty.⁸ Many elderly individuals are ignored or isolated as a result of the growth of nuclear households and urbanization, which diminishes traditional family-based assistance. Due to longer life expectancies, less financial independence, and legal concerns about asset ownership, older women are more at risk.⁶ The requirements of the aging population receive little attention from policymakers, and there is a dearth of specialized social, legal, or infrastructure support. Creating comprehensive, age-appropriate healthcare services, bolstering social safety nets, guaranteeing financial stability, and advocating for laws that facilitate family caring are all necessary to meet these problems.

Keywords: Population Aging, Aging of Bangladesh, Old Age Allowance

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