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State of gerontology in Iran: A sociological perspective

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The paper explores how Iran is currently facing population aging and how geriatrics is necessary under the aging conditions. For the gerontologists the fact is obvious. But, many developing countries including Iran have not deep-rooted experiences in aging, and similarly not sufficient infrastructures. They need to strengthen themselves in the relevant area by developing geriatrics. However, every time we talk about population aging, we learn something new. In this process, new perspectives and new angles emerge which need adequate collaborations. Such a situation/ discourse are known as a part of gerontology. While health gerontology investigates and discusses health status in old age and health care for older people, economic gerontology discusses older people's roles in the economy-their roles in labor market, and as consumers who purchase goods and services. Not only in Iran, but everywhere else in the world the consumption patterns differ markedly from the case of younger individuals. However, the economic crisis and inflation affect the elderly more than the younger people. Sociologically speaking, social gerontology studies the social contacts and social approaches of older people. Similarly, it studies how older people interact with their kin and friends as well as which roles they play in society. Both, social interaction and social roles change as population age. Moreover, aging people are also affected by the process of globalization migration, cultural exchange etc. In Iran, according to the country's population and housing census of 2006, aging people over 65 will double to almost over 10 million within seven years from 5,130,000 people in 2006 which will be above 12 percent of the total population. Gerontologically speaking, Iran is greying because of the socio-economic and health measures adopted in the past half century. This development has far-reaching consequences for all the citizens in the years to come. Such greying people need their own products, their public transportation, their pension schemes, their care schemes, their financial basis etc. That is to say, the planning system must best react to the emerging population change. However, the scientific discipline of gerontology must play its role to bring about a better quality of life for the increasing seniors with special reference to the female elderly who own less and live longer. In conclusion, we must keep in mind that aging population does not threaten the existing social and welfare institutions, but instead, it opens up potentials for restructuring and reinvention. While life expectancy is longer than ever before, living conditions and healthy aging must be ever improved and upgraded. Similarly, the economy must be so geared to be able to provide the growing aging people with the goods and services that they need, and keep, them ever healthy and wealthy.

Biography

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi is a Professor of Sociology at Al-Zahra University in Tehran. He is the author of over 20 books in areas of sociology, demography, development, ageing, social work, youth studies, family studies, tourism etc. He has published over 100 articles at national and international levels and participated at about 150 national and international conferences to deliver lectures and present papers. Member of Editorial board of International Journals: 1) Middle East Journal of Age and Ageing 2) Middle East Journal of Psychiatry and Alzheimers 3) The Journal of Happiness and Well-Being, Ankara 4) Journal of Social Sciences, New Delhi 5) Asia Pacific Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, Batangas, Philippines.

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