

Situation of Elderly in Sultanate of Oman

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Introduction

The Sultanate of Oman is located in the south eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It has an approximate geographical area of 309,500 square kilometers and a population of 2.577 million people (Ministry of Health, 2006). The main language used in the country is Arabic. The largest ethnic group is Arab, and the other ethnic groups are Baluchi, South Asian and African. The largest religious group is Muslim. The country is an upper middle income group country based on World Bank 2006 criteria(1). Oman saw rapid development, triggered by the discovery of oil, which took place under an enlightened new political leadership.

Overview of population ageing; 1950-2050

There is no recorded population census before the 1970s. With regards to the Elderly population in Oman, they constituted 3.0% of the 1993 population which increased to 3.2% in 2003 then to 3.5% in 2010. Projections indicate that the elderly population in Oman will reach 231,975 in 2025 to constitute 5.8% of the total population and will increase further to 821,023 in 2050 to constitute 15.2% of the total population [9, 10]. Such rapid increase in the proportion of old people in Oman is the result of the continuous decline in infant mortality and the increase in life expectancy at birth brought on by the rapid economic and social development, improvement in the standard of living as well as the delivery of quality healthcare services [11, 12]. Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births dropped from 58.3 in 1980 - 1985 to 15.2 in 2000 - 2005 and it is projected to become as low as 6.6 by the year 2050 [11, 12]. Concomitantly life expectancy at birth has gained 11.5 years resulting in an increase from 62.7 years in 1980 - 1985 to 74.2 years in 2000 - 2005 and it is expected to reach 80.9 years by 2050.(2)

Changing percentage of older persons in additions to total population

Oman has undergone a significant demographic transition since the 1970s. Life expectancy has increased from 50 years of age in 1970 to 73.9 years in 2010. With this, infant mortality has significantly decreased from 190 deaths per 1000 live births in 1962 to 7.3 deaths in 2010. Fertility rates have fluctuated from 7.2 births per woman in 1962 to 8.3 in the early 1980s, decreasing significantly thereafter to 2.1 in 2010. Nevertheless, the population in Oman still remains young with 44% of the population below the age of 15 years today, and only 4.2% of the population above age 60. Aging data in Oman shows different trends depending on the index used. Elderly Dependency Ratio EDR, for example decreased from 6.3 in 1970 to 3.6 in 2010 while the Aging Index, which was 6.9 in 1970 dropped to 4.9 in 1990 but started to rise again, reaching 9.3 in 2010. These changes are mainly due to the change in fertility rates in Oman. A tool that may be more useful in showing the aging trends in Oman is the Median Age, which steadily rose from 18.9 years in 2008 to 24.4 in 2010.

Feminization of ageing

The national elderly health survey sultanate of Oman (2008) reported that 52.2% of the Omani elders are male, while 58% were in their sixties and 4.4% were aged 85 and more.3

• Household work by older women in particular but also of older men in some outdoor work like transporting grandchildren to school

• The national elderly health survey sultanate of Oman (2008) reported that 27% of the Omani elders never worked to earn a living, while 22% were still working in their sixties. The Female contribution to the workforce was limited based on the then prevailing culture that women are not expected to work to earn a living.

- **Role in the bringing up of grandchildren which becomes even more crucial in case of shrinking family size and increased emigration of adults due to globalization**

Training programs for the health professional dealing with elderly patients

The Old age psychiatry team at Sultan Qaboos University hospital conducts regular workshops for Primary care physicians and nurses on topics such as Elderly mental health and Dementia. More recently the team launched a dementia awareness course for Community Nurses and Volunteers in Order to provide them with the skills and knowledge to help the Care givers at home.

References

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