



INAUGURAL LECTURE

**POPULATION AGEING:
TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN
THE 21ST CENTURY**

SPENCER EMPADING SANGGIN



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Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Kota Samarahan

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Published in Malaysia by
UNIMAS Publisher,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak,
94300 Kota Samarahan,
Sarawak, Malaysia.

Printed in Malaysia by
Lee Miing Press Sdn Bhd (541980-U)
No. 48, Jalan Ellis,
93300 Kuching,
Sarawak, Malaysia.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Spencer Empading Sanggin, Prof., Dr.

INAUGURAL LECTURE: POPULATION AGEING: TRENDS AND
CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY / Spencer Empading Sanggin.

Bibliography: page 63

ISBN 978-967-2008-10-1

1. Older people--Social aspects.
 2. Aging--Social aspects. 3. Older people.
 4. Aging. I. Title.
- 305.26

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PREFACE

The book basically discusses the trends in the world population growth, specifically focusing on population ageing. The global trend in the growth in the proportion of ageing population is a direct consequent of rapidly declining fertility and mortality rates. The shift from a young population to an old population goes through a transition that can be explained with two relevant theories: Demographic Transition Model and Modernization Theory. Relying specifically on the data provided by the United Nations Population Division, I tried to explore the phenomenon of population ageing in the world and use selected countries, representing the developed and developing countries as case studies.

The capacity and readiness to deal with the growing numbers of old-aged will differ between countries: Most developed countries have reached the ageing status in the past few decades, but for many less developed countries, this is totally a whole new experience. While it is argued that the growing ageing population is associated with development - economically and socially, which has enabled people in the developed world to live longer lives, at the same time it is a "cause" for concerns as old age comes with different sets of needs and challenges. Several key issues and challenges faced by

countries with population ageing are also discussed. Among the important challenges are increasing old-aged dependency burden, higher demands for old-age care services, and a strain on the economy. Last but not least, a case study of ageing in Sarawak is also presented towards the end, that provide empirical data highlighting similar trends as well as key issues faced by the old aged population in Sarawak, and such trends will certainly have serious implications and concern for the government and families as the old aged needs will increase both in numbers and intensity.

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April 25 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my family. To my caring, loving, and supportive wife, Rose: my deepest gratitude. Your constant encouragement especially during difficult times are much appreciated and duly noted. To my three children, Neal Hubart Megat, Alvin Miai and Michelle Ann, you have been my inspiration for all the things that I have done, either at home or in the work place.

To the Dean, Associate Professor Dr Neilson Ilan Mersat, and all my colleague in the Faculty of Social Sciences, thank you very much for your support and camaraderie.

Special thanks and appreciations goes to the Vice Chancellor, Prof Dato Dr Mohd Kadim Suadi and former Vice Chancellors (Prof. Emeritus Dato' Ir. Dr. Mohamad Zawawi Ismail, Prof Datuk Dr Yusuf Hadi, Prof Datuk Dr Abdul Rashid Abdullah, Prof Datuk Khairuddin Ab. Hamid) and all the deputy Vice Chancellors (past and present) for giving me the opportunity to serve UNIMAS, and for your constant support and encouragement.

Not forgetting, to my former supervisors, Prof Dr Edgar J. Boone and Prof Dr John G. Richardson, thank you for your understanding, encouragement and guidance when I was doing my doctorate.

I am also immensely grateful to UNIMAS Publisher for proofreading and editing of the manuscript, and finally published the book.

INTRODUCTION

The global population is fast changing in size as well as structures. Such demographic dynamic is a crucial factor and contextual backdrop in the development of any country. I would also argue that economic growth, development and population change are intertwined; changes in population size and structure will impact upon development, and economic development will influence growth in population. The reduction in the rate of population growth was a direct result of declining fertility and mortality. The drop in fertility and mortality, on the other hand, was influenced by the advances in science and technology through improvement in food production, better health and an overall higher quality of life. Increasing economic productivity will create more jobs, and enhances the economy's capacity to absorb increasing number of workers into productive employment.

The aim of this paper is to look at the world population with the intention of highlighting the characteristics of population growth including the historical trend and explanations for the patterns of population change. Efforts will be made to relate the impact and challenges faced by people of different parts of the world as a consequent of changes in population structure, particularly with regards to increasing older population.

The world is rapidly ageing. The proportion of elderly population (65 and above) are on the rise mainly due to two main demographic factors: mortality and fertility. The decline in mortality and later followed by a decline in fertility have resulted in decreasing the percentage of younger population and an increase in the proportion of older population contributing to what is known as population ageing. This trend has been happening in the developed countries for over half a century ago, and is happening at a more rapid rate among the developing and less developed countries since the last few decades. Evidence have shown that the unprecedented demographic changes in the age structure has, and will have, some social and economics implications for the country and the world at large. Findings from a study on ageing in Sarawak revealed important information on the characteristics of the elderly population and the challenges they faced.



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ISBN 978-967-2008-10-1

