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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POPULATION AGEING IN INDIA- A GROWING CONCERN

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Abstract

Population ageing is a global phenomenon. The population of elderly (60+) is increasing globally. The number of elderly is increasing faster than the general population across the world. The world population is not only increasing but also growing older due to increased life expectancies and decreased fertility rates across nearly all countries. India's aging population is growing rapidly but the pace of ageing in India is considered moderate compared to some other South Asian countries. India's elderly population is projected to grow from 10.5 % in 2022 to 20.8 % by 2050. At present India is quite young having the advantage of youth bulge. India's population has a large percentage of young people. But it is projected to become a rapidly ageing society in the coming decades. The share of elderly people aged 60 years and above is increasing. Hence this is an area that has to be received adequate attention. Hence the present paper is focused on the problems of the ageing population and causes for the growth of elderly population and policy implications. The study of India's population ageing is the most crucial factor for planning purposes. India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) was dropped from 6.18 in the 1950s to 1.9 in 2021, which is below the replacement level of 2.1.

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Introduction:-

The term ageing refers to the process of becoming older. It is a complex, multifaceted process that affects individuals, families, communities and societies as a whole. The LASI studies (Longitudinal Ageing Study in India) 2016 and 2021 highlight several key factors such as declining fertility rates, increasing life expectancy and demographic transition contributing to India's aging population. LASI data indicates that India's population is indeed ageing rapidly but India faces significant challenges in adapting to its ageing population. The healthcare system is often ill-equipped to handle the specific needs of older adults. The social security system is inadequate. The traditional family support system is weakening in many parts of the country. The global population of older adults is rapidly increasing. By 2050, the number of elderly aged 60 years and older is projected to nearly double. India experiences a significant aging of its population before achieving high levels of economic development and before becoming rich. Falling fertility rate in India leading to a smaller working age population and lower savings rates, investment and economic growth. The population of the very old (80+) is expected to grow at the fastest rate. The trend of a rapidly ageing population in India is undeniable and necessitates proactive planning and policy interventions to address the associated challenges and opportunities.

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Review of Literature:-

Dharmalingam. A.(1994)The study shed light on various aspects of population ageing in India . His research study of elderly in South Indian village has highlighted the shifting dynamics of family structures in India such as nuclear families and migration of young people to urban areas and impact on the traditional system of elderly care within families. The challenges faced by elderly women such as widowhood, poverty and lack of access to resources.

V. Kumar(1997)The study likely reflects the significant impact of the erosion of the extended family structure on the well-being of elderly individuals in India. The decline of the extended family can leave elderly individuals more vulnerable to social isolation, loneliness and a lack of social support.It can have a significant impact on the mental health of elderly individuals.

P.S. Nair (2010)T he study explores the demographic trends of population ageing in Kerala including changes in life expectancy, fertility rates and the growing proportion of elderly in the population and the social and economic challenges faced by the elderly in Kerala such as poverty, social isolation and access to social security and support services.

Arunika Agarwal et. al.(2016) The study examined the India's rapid demographic shift and the rising burden of elderly diseases. Chronic diseases are rapidly increasing among older adults. This poses significant health and economic burdens on the healthcare system and families

K. Thampi(2024) The study on the experiences of older adults in India particularly focusing on the concept of aging in place. It explores the perspectives, challenges and determinants of older adults choosing to age in their own homes and communities.

Objectives:-

1. To know the causes of rising elderly population in India
2. To examine the implications of population ageing
3. To study the regional variations in Population ageing in India.

Methodology:-

The present study is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic,academic journals, books, online sources, variouswebsites and Google Scholar

Characteristics of an Ageing Population

- 1 Increased proportion of older individuals (65+ years)
- 2Decreased proportions of younger individuals
- 3 Rising Median age
- 4 Changing population pyramid (more inverted with a larger base of older individuals)

Causes for Population Ageing

Declining Fertility Rate:

There is e declining fertility rate in India which is a major contributing factor to the ageing population. The replacement level fertility rate is around 2.1 children per woman.It is currently below the replacement level , meaning that each generation is having fewer children than the previous one.Fertility have fallen below the replacement level in 17 of the 29 states and territories.The declining fertility rate is a significant demographic trend in many countries, including India. Hence, the proportion of older population in the population starts to increase.

Table No 1:- India- Historical Fertility Rate Data.

Year	Fertility Rate
1950	5.9
1960	5.8
1970	5.5
1980	4.8
1990	4.0
2000	3.3

2010	2.6
2020	2.2
2024	2.1

The above table reveals that declining fertility rate in India . It was 5.9 in 1950 and declined to 2.1 in 2024 .

Causes of Declining Fertility Rate

1 Urbanization: As people move to cities , their life style and family planning preferences change. People prefer smaller families due to high cost of living in urban areas. Now a days rural areas are also experiencing a fall in fertility rates.

2 Education: Higher education , especially among women leads to delayed marriage and childbearing. Women are prioritizing careers ,education and prefer single child.

3 Government Policies: The fertility rate has been declining due to the government’s family planning programmes.

Increase In Life Expectancy:

Life expectancy in India has been increasing .As of 2024, the average life expectancy in India is approximately 70.62 years.

This growth rate can be attributed to advancement in medical care , improved social conditions and enhanced healthcare accessibility.

Table No 2:- India: Historical Life Expectancy Data.

Year	Life Expectancy
1950	35.21
1960	41.13
1970	47.41
1980	53.47
1990	57.66
2000	62.28
2010	66.43
2020	69.73
2024	70.62

Table 2 states that in 1950 Life Expectancy was 35. 21 and which is increased to 70.62 in 2024

Regional Variations

Southern Indian states Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andra Pradesh and Telangana face one of the biggest demographic challenges in the form of an ageing population.Fertility rates in Southern India declined sharply over the past two decades.Many young professionals migrate to urban areas or abroad, leaving aged family member behind without adequate support.Some Southern state governments are encouraging bigger families through money incentives , tax reductions, childcare support and direct money provision.

Table No 3:- Decline in Share of South States in Indian Population.

Year	Share of North States	Share of South States
1951	39.1%	26.2%
1961	38.5%	25.2%
1971	37.9%	24.8%
1981	38.3%	24.2%
1991	38.8%	23.3%
2001	40.2%	21.8%
2011	41.4%	20.9%
2022*	43.2%	19.8%

Estimates

Source: census department

The table indicates that the share of North Indian states in Indian Population was 39.1% in 1951 and estimated to increase 43.2% in 2022 and the share of south Indian states was 26.2% in 1951 and estimated to decrease 19.8% in 2022.

Implications of Population Ageing:

Population ageing has far reaching implications for societies worldwide. As the proportion of older adults increases, governments face significant challenges.

Rising Healthcare costs:

The healthcare costs for the elderly in India are increasing due to age related health conditions.

Pension and social security pressures:

Government face challenges in funding pension and social security systems.

Shortage of labour force :

A shrinking working age population can lead to scarcity of labour in key sectors.

Economic Growth:

Smaller younger population leads to reduced consumer demand affecting sectors like housing, education and consumer goods.

Inadequate healthcare infrastructure:

There is a significant shortage of healthcare facilities particularly in rural areas. Many healthcare facilities in rural areas lack basic facilities such as clean water, sanitation and electricity.,

Changes in Family dynamics:

Older individuals may experience changes in family structures such as living alone or with relatives.

Findings of the Study:-

1. Presently India is quite young country.
2. The pace of ageing in India is considered moderate compared to some other South Asian countries.
3. South Indian states are ageing faster than north Indian states.
4. Number of elderly women are more than number of elderly men.
5. Japan has the oldest population in the world.
6. The informal sector plays a crucial role in the Indian economy.
7. The population aged 85 and above is growing rapidly.
8. Japan and South Korea are the world's fastest ageing countries.

Conclusion:-

India's elderly population is growing faster than the general population. India's ageing population requires a multifaceted policy response. The government should prioritize investments in healthcare, social security and age friendly infrastructure. With effective planning and implementation, India can turn the challenge of an ageing population into an opportunity for growth, innovation and social cohesion. By adopting a proactive and inclusive approach, we can ensure that ageing population is a source of strength, not weakness. As we move forward, it is crucial to recognise the contributions of older Indians and to create a supportive environment that enables them to age with dignity and purpose.

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