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Article

Aging in Iran: Challenges and Future Policy Directions

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Abstract: Iran is undergoing a demographic transition, with projections indicating that older adults will account for over 30% of the population by 2050. This rapid aging trend, driven by declining fertility rates and increased life expectancy, presents significant challenges, including financial strain on pension systems, social isolation due to changes in family structures, and growing healthcare demands driven by chronic conditions. Although there are existing policies aimed at addressing aging, the fragmentation and lack of coordination between these policies hinder effective implementation and comprehensive support. This study employs a sociological framework, incorporating world-systems theory and network theory, to analyze the current state of aging-related policies in Iran. The findings reveal critical gaps in policy integration, governance, and resource allocation. Drawing on global best practices, including lessons from Japan, Scandinavian countries, and Singapore, the study proposes a unified policy approach that aligns with international standards while considering the socio-cultural and economic context of Iran. Key recommendations include the establishment of a centralized body to oversee aging initiatives, the development of age-friendly urban spaces, the promotion of community-based care models, and the integration of technology to enhance healthcare and social participation. This study aims to provide a comprehensive roadmap for Iran to address the challenges of an aging population and ensure the well-being of older adults in a rapidly changing society.

Keywords: aging population; policy integration; social isolation; community-based care; age-friendly urban spaces

1. Introduction

Iran is undergoing a profound demographic transformation, characterized by a rapid increase in the proportion of older adults. By 2050, it is projected that more than 30% of the Iranian population will be aged 60 and above, compared to just 9% in 2020 (United Nations, 2019). This shift is largely driven by a combination of factors, including declining fertility rates, rising life expectancy, and advancements in healthcare that have contributed to longer lives. While these developments signify progress in many respects, they also present significant challenges for the country's social, economic, and healthcare systems, which are not yet fully equipped to manage an aging population.

The fertility rate in Iran has dropped sharply from 6.5 children per woman in the 1980s to below 2.1 in recent years, which is below the replacement level (World Bank, 2021). This decline in fertility is a key factor contributing to the aging population, alongside an increase in life expectancy, which has now reached over 76 years (World Health Organization, 2020). These changes have led to a demographic shift where the working-age population must support an increasing number of older adults, placing significant pressure on the country's social welfare and healthcare systems. Furthermore, the dependency ratio—defined as the number of dependents (the young and the elderly) per working-age individual—is rapidly growing, signaling an urgent need for policies that address the needs of the aging population.

As Iran faces these demographic challenges, it is also grappling with a broader global context. The country's integration into global welfare regimes remains limited, complicating the formulation of aging policies that could effectively address the unique challenges faced by its older population. Peripheral economies like Iran are particularly vulnerable to these shifts, as their economic structures often lack the resources and infrastructure to support large numbers of elderly citizens. Wallerstein's world-systems theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how such demographic transitions in peripheral economies exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, making the task of crafting effective aging policies even more complex (Wallerstein, 2004).

In addition to economic and social inequalities, aging policies in Iran are further hindered by weak social networks. Castells' network theory highlights the importance of strong social networks in supporting older adults, yet in Iran, intergenerational and community networks remain underdeveloped. Many older individuals in Iran face isolation and limited access to essential services, including healthcare, social support, and economic resources. This lack of robust social networks not only exacerbates the challenges of aging but also calls for targeted policy interventions that focus on strengthening community ties and improving access to resources.

The theoretical underpinnings of this study integrate Wallerstein's world-systems theory and Castells' network theory to provide a more holistic view of aging in Iran. This study aims to address the structural inequalities that influence aging policies, while also emphasizing the role of social networks in mitigating the challenges faced by older adults. By combining these frameworks, this research offers a unique perspective on aging in Iran, considering both the local socio-political dynamics and broader global influences.

This study extends Wallerstein's world-systems theory by demonstrating how peripheral economies like Iran face demographic transitions that exacerbate social and economic inequalities. The underdeveloped integration into global welfare regimes further complicates aging policies in these contexts (Wallerstein, 2004). Additionally, building on Castells' network theory, this research highlights the critical role of social networks in mitigating aging challenges. Weak intergenerational and community networks in Iran limit access to essential resources for older adults, emphasizing the need for network-based interventions (Castells, 2009).

Given Iran's specific demographic trajectory and the socio-political implications of an aging population, this research seeks to offer valuable insights into how aging can be understood and managed within the context of middle-income countries. The ultimate goal of this study is to propose future policy directions that can address the pressing needs of an aging population, improve the social and economic well-being of older adults, and ensure that policies are both equitable and sustainable. By identifying gaps in existing frameworks and policies, this study contributes to ongoing global discussions on aging, socio-economic justice, and the development of effective aging policies in developing contexts (Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2011).

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Financial Insecurity Among Retirees*

A significant proportion of retirees in Iran face financial insecurity, primarily due to an underdeveloped pension system, escalating healthcare costs, and rising inflation. Research by Salehi-Isfahani (2012) reveals that less than half of the elderly population has access to adequate retirement benefits. This financial vulnerability often compels older adults to depend on their families for support or continue working beyond retirement age, thereby compromising their overall quality of life. In this context, the lack of a robust pension system exacerbates the challenges faced by the elderly population, leaving them highly dependent on informal family structures. Drawing from Estes' (2001) political economy of aging framework, this study examines how economic instability and insufficient welfare policies in Iran have created a situation where older adults are increasingly vulnerable.

Comparative studies highlight that integrated pension schemes in countries like Germany and Japan provide more stable and reliable safety nets for their elderly populations (Esping-Andersen, 1999). These international examples demonstrate that reforms to Iran's fragmented pension system could potentially alleviate some of the financial insecurity faced by older adults. The necessity for pension reform in Iran is clear, as it would reduce the financial burdens on elderly individuals and their families, providing a more sustainable and equitable solution for the aging population.

Drawing from Estes' (2001) political economy of aging framework, this study contextualizes aging within Iran's socio-political structures, where economic instability and limited welfare policies heighten vulnerabilities for older adults

2.2. Insufficient Social Participation Frameworks

Social engagement plays a pivotal role in the mental and emotional well-being of older adults. However, urban environments in Iran lack the necessary infrastructure to foster active participation among the elderly. Public spaces and programs designed with age-friendly features are scarce, which contributes to social isolation among older adults. Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2017) observe that the erosion of traditional communal structures has further isolated the elderly, limiting their opportunities for social interaction. This lack of social participation not only affects the mental health of older adults but also undermines the social fabric of society. Drawing inspiration from Quadagno's (1999) work on welfare state theories, this study identifies the gaps in Iran's aging policies, particularly in relation to social participation.

Lessons from Scandinavian countries, which emphasize community-based programs and the creation of age-friendly public spaces, provide valuable insights for addressing social isolation in Iran (Anttonen et al., 2003). These countries have successfully developed frameworks that encourage social engagement among older adults, reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation. Iran could adopt similar strategies to foster stronger social ties, enhance the quality of life for the elderly, and improve their mental health.

2.3. Weak Intergenerational Cohesion

Cultural and economic shifts in Iran have strained intergenerational relationships, further complicating the situation for older adults. Migration of younger family members to urban centers or abroad, coupled with evolving family dynamics, has diminished the availability of informal care networks (Sharifi et al., 2020). This weakening of intergenerational cohesion significantly undermines the support systems that have traditionally been available to the elderly. Informal care from family members has long been a cornerstone of elderly support in Iran, but this structure is increasingly under pressure.

Inspired by Quadagno's (1999) work on welfare state theories, this research examines the gaps in Iran's aging policies and their implications for socio-economic inequalities

In contrast, Scandinavian countries have implemented successful intergenerational housing programs that encourage mutual support between different age groups. These programs have shown how intentional design can foster stronger intergenerational connections, reduce social isolation, and preserve cultural values of respect for the elderly. By examining these international models, this study emphasizes the importance of strengthening intergenerational relationships and promoting programs that support both younger and older generations.

2.4. Comparative Insights from Other Nations

Insights from countries with successful aging policies provide valuable lessons for Iran. For instance, Japan's long-term care insurance system integrates healthcare and social services to address the diverse needs of its elderly population. This comprehensive approach ensures that older adults receive the necessary care and social support without relying solely on their families. Similarly, Scandinavian countries have made significant strides in creating age-friendly communities that

promote active aging. These communities prioritize the integration of older adults into society, ensuring that they remain engaged and supported throughout their lives.

These international examples underscore the necessity for Iran to adopt a more cohesive and integrated strategy for managing aging. By learning from these models, Iran can develop policies that not only address healthcare needs but also foster social inclusion, reduce isolation, and create a more sustainable environment for the elderly.

2.5. Conceptual Framework for Policy Development

The literature emphasizes several key concepts for developing effective aging policies in Iran. These include:

1. **Integrated Policy Approaches:** There is a need for coordinated efforts among healthcare, social services, and economic support systems. Effective aging policies should bridge the gaps between these sectors to create a holistic approach to elderly care.
2. **Community-Based Solutions:** Local initiatives that empower older adults and promote active participation in society can reduce dependency on institutional care. Programs that encourage social engagement and community involvement are essential for enhancing the quality of life for older adults.
3. **Technological Integration:** Leveraging technological innovations such as telemedicine, smart home technologies, and digital platforms can improve access to healthcare and services for older adults. These innovations can enhance the independence and well-being of the elderly population.

By integrating these concepts, this study lays the foundation for policy recommendations that can guide Iran toward a more inclusive and sustainable approach to aging. These recommendations focus on addressing the financial, social, and healthcare challenges faced by the elderly and ensuring that policies are equitable and responsive to the needs of an aging population.

This study, by extending Wallerstein's world-systems theory, demonstrates how peripheral economies like Iran face unique demographic challenges exacerbated by limited integration into global welfare regimes. Additionally, building on Castells' network theory, it highlights how weak social networks among older adults in Iran hinder their access to essential economic and social resources. This literature review emphasizes the need for integrated, community-based, and technologically supported policy approaches to address the challenges of aging in Iran effectively.

3. Methodology

This study employs a comprehensive qualitative research methodology tailored to the socio-cultural and policy context of aging in Iran. The methodological framework is designed to ensure thorough data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the challenges and opportunities associated with aging. The main components of this methodology are as follows:

- **Analysis of Policy Documents:** A critical examination of national and regional policy documents related to aging from the 1980s to the present. This includes government strategies, action plans, legislative frameworks, and international documents such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (2002). The aim of this analysis is to assess official policies and identify gaps and challenges in aging policy systems.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** This study aimed to examine the challenges and opportunities of aging in Iran and their impact on aging-related policies using a qualitative approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of stakeholders, including policymakers, social welfare experts, geriatric healthcare providers, and older adults from various socio-economic backgrounds. Open-ended questions allowed participants to share detailed insights into the socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions of aging in Iran. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, which involved

steps such as familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and validating findings through participant feedback.

- **Thematic Analysis:** Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, key themes such as policy coherence and integration, accessibility and inclusivity of healthcare and social services, and intergenerational relationships and cultural perceptions of aging were identified. Thematic analysis helped to extract and identify key concepts from the qualitative data, providing a deeper understanding of the social and cultural structures related to aging in Iran.
- **Data Validation:** The findings from policy analysis, interviews, and thematic analysis were cross-validated to ensure consistency and reliability. Preliminary findings were shared with participants to confirm interpretations and incorporate their feedback. This process of validation ensured that the results were accurate and aligned with the real experiences and perspectives of the participants.

This methodology is particularly effective in analyzing the various dimensions of aging in Iran and providing policy recommendations for improving the conditions of older adults. It combines document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis to effectively explore the challenges and opportunities in aging policies within Iran.

4. Findings

4.1. Key Challenges (Table 1)

- **Policy Fragmentation:** The policy landscape in Iran is fragmented, with a lack of coherence across different aging-related policies. These policies often operate independently from one another, leading to overlapping mandates and inadequate coordination between agencies. This fragmentation results in inefficiencies and prevents the holistic addressing of the needs of older adults (Harper, 2014). The absence of an integrated framework complicates the development of comprehensive aging policies, contributing to gaps in service delivery and support for the elderly.
- **Social Isolation:** Older adults in Iran face significant challenges in terms of social interaction. Urbanization, the lack of age-friendly public spaces, and the absence of community-based programs have resulted in many elderly individuals experiencing loneliness and a sense of disconnection. This social isolation exacerbates mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, making it a key concern for aging populations. Many older adults report limited opportunities for engagement with peers, which leads to reduced social participation and a diminished quality of life.
- **Economic Pressures:** Economic insecurity among older adults is a major concern in Iran. The country's pension system is inadequate, leaving a significant portion of the elderly population without sufficient financial support. Additionally, rising inflation and living costs make it difficult for retirees to maintain financial stability. Many older individuals continue to work in informal sectors or take on physically demanding jobs beyond retirement age in order to meet their basic needs. This financial instability not only affects their economic well-being but also compromises their overall quality of life.
- **Cultural Shifts:** The erosion of traditional family structures and the migration of younger generations to urban areas or abroad have weakened the familial support systems that once provided care for older adults. This cultural shift has resulted in many elderly individuals being left without reliable informal caregiving networks. The loss of intergenerational support further compounds the challenges faced by the elderly, as they often have to rely on formal care services, which are often insufficient or difficult to access.

Cultural shifts in Iran, including urbanization and smaller family sizes, have disrupted traditional caregiving structures. This has left many older adults without adequate support networks, exacerbating their vulnerability (Sharifi et al., 2020). Aging populations are often viewed as a financial

burden; however, studies like those by Bloom et al. (2011) highlight the economic potential of older adults when provided with opportunities for lifelong learning and part-time employment.

Certainly! Here’s the table in English based on the revised findings:

Table 1. “Thematic Analysis of Key Challenges in Aging Policies and Social Support for Older Adults in Iran”.

Main Theme	Extracted Codes	Interview Excerpt (Fact)
Policy Fragmentation	1. Lack of coordination between agencies	<i>“There are so many different programs, but none of them seem to connect. One department says it’s not their responsibility, and the next one says the same.”</i>
	2. Weak integration of policies	<i>“Each ministry has its own policy, which causes disconnection. There’s no cohesive or integrated policy framework.”</i>
	3. Ambiguity in the division of responsibilities	<i>“Responsibilities are divided between ministries, but none of them clearly know what they are supposed to do.”</i>
	4. Lack of long-term planning for the elderly	<i>“There is no long-term planning for the elderly, and any programs that exist are only short-term.”</i>
Social Isolation	1. Lack of social support networks in the community	<i>“We don’t have any networks to support the elderly, no social groups for us to turn to for help.”</i>
	2. Generational disconnect and loss of family bonds	<i>“My children have moved away, and the family relationships we once had are gone. This has caused many elderly people to feel isolated.”</i>
	3. Absence of dedicated programs for social interaction among older adults	<i>“There are no specific programs for elderly people to interact, we just sit at home.”</i>
	4. Increased sense of isolation in urban areas due to smaller family structures	<i>“In the past, everyone lived in the same neighborhood and helped each other, but now everyone lives in their own apartments and becomes isolated.”</i>
Economic Pressures	1. Insufficient pension system and financial instability	<i>“I am retired, but my pension doesn’t even cover rent, let alone medical costs.”</i>
	2. High inflation and reduced purchasing power for the elderly	<i>“With prices rising, my pension is not enough to cover my daily food, let alone healthcare expenses.”</i>
	3. Need for elderly to work in informal or physically demanding jobs beyond retirement	<i>“I still work in the market because my pension is not enough to meet basic needs.”</i>

	4. Economic struggles of families affecting elderly individuals	<i>"My children also have financial problems and cannot help me much; I have to carry the burden of life myself."</i>
Cultural Shifts	1. Breakdown of family caregiving structures	<i>"In the past, families were responsible for caring for the elderly, but now children have moved to big cities and cannot help us."</i>
	2. Migration of younger generations and its impact on elderly support	<i>"My children have gone abroad, and now no one is here to help me in times of need."</i>
	3. Urban lifestyle changes and lack of accessible facilities for the elderly	<i>"In cities, everything has changed; the streets are not designed for elderly people, and it's hard to move around."</i>
	4. Decreased role of older adults in society due to cultural and social shifts	<i>"Today, instead of involving elderly people in decision-making, they are seen more as a financial burden."</i>

4.2. Opportunities

- **Technological Integration:** The rapid growth of technology offers significant opportunities to address some of the challenges faced by older adults in Iran. Telemedicine platforms can bridge the gap between elderly individuals and essential healthcare services, particularly in remote or underserved areas. Additionally, the adoption of smart home technologies can improve safety, enhance independence, and reduce the risks associated with aging. Digital literacy programs can also empower older adults to engage with online communities, access important information, and reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Policy Innovations:** Iran can learn from international best practices and adapt policy frameworks that have proven successful in other countries. Examples include:
 - **Japan:** Japan's long-term care insurance system integrates both healthcare and social services, offering comprehensive support to older adults.
 - **Scandinavian Countries:** These nations promote community-centric approaches to aging, focusing on active aging, social participation, and reducing isolation among elderly populations.
 - **Singapore:** Singapore's multi-generational housing initiatives aim to strengthen familial bonds and provide elderly individuals with greater social support within the family unit, thus reducing the risks of social isolation.
- **Economic Participation:** Older adults in Iran possess valuable experience and skills that can contribute to society. By creating opportunities for part-time work, volunteer programs, and mentorship roles, older individuals can continue to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Additionally, policies that encourage lifelong learning and re-skilling initiatives can help older adults remain active participants in the workforce and maintain financial independence.
- **Active Aging Frameworks:** The promotion of active aging offers an opportunity to reshape societal perceptions of the elderly. Programs focused on physical activity, mental health, and cultural engagement can significantly enhance the overall well-being of older adults. Encouraging older individuals to remain active, both physically and socially, can improve their integration into community life, reduce isolation, and foster a sense of purpose.

By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on the identified opportunities, Iran can create a more inclusive and sustainable aging policy framework that supports the elderly and promotes their well-being in both local and global contexts.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Governance and Policy Coordination

To address the challenges identified in the aging process in Iran, a unified governance framework for aging policies is crucial. The establishment of a central governing body responsible for coordinating aging-related initiatives will ensure effective implementation and reduce fragmentation. This body should facilitate collaboration between relevant agencies, including health, social services, and economic support, and be empowered to create and monitor policies that address the complex needs of older adults. A national aging strategy must be developed that aligns with global standards, such as the **Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging** (2002), while considering the unique socio-economic context of Iran. This strategy should focus on promoting health, economic security, and social inclusion, providing a comprehensive approach to aging that reflects both global best practices and local solutions tailored to the Iranian society.

5.2. Community Engagement

Creating inclusive, age-friendly communities is vital for promoting the social participation and well-being of older adults. Key policy recommendations include:

- **Age-Friendly Cities:** Urban planning should prioritize accessibility and safety for older adults. Public spaces, transportation systems, and infrastructures need to be designed with seniors in mind. This can include features like ramps, elevators, dedicated recreational areas, and accessible healthcare facilities. Such improvements can help reduce social isolation and enhance mobility, contributing to healthier, more active aging.
- **Intergenerational Programs:** Encouraging collaboration between different age groups can enhance familial relationships and promote social cohesion. Programs that foster interactions between younger and older generations—such as mentorship schemes, community gardens, or intergenerational housing projects—can bridge gaps in understanding and provide opportunities for mutual support. These initiatives would also encourage older adults to remain active and involved in their communities, which can positively impact their mental and emotional well-being.

5.3. Financial Security

Economic security is essential for ensuring that older adults can live with dignity and independence. Key strategies for enhancing financial security include:

- **Expanding Pension Systems:** The current pension coverage in Iran is insufficient. Therefore, there is a pressing need to increase both the reach and adequacy of pension systems to provide a stable safety net for all seniors. Expanding public pension schemes and improving their accessibility would ensure that all older adults have a reliable source of income in retirement.
- **Private Sector Engagement:** In addition to expanding public pension systems, the involvement of the private sector in elderly care services should be incentivized. Offering tax incentives and subsidies for businesses investing in elderly care, such as assisted living facilities, home healthcare providers, and other senior services, can create a more sustainable and diverse care system that reduces the burden on public resources.

5.4. Health and Social Care

Ensuring that older adults have access to high-quality health and social care is crucial to improving their overall well-being. Recommendations in this area include:

- **Geriatric Healthcare Infrastructure:** Significant investment is needed in specialized healthcare facilities for older adults, as well as in training programs for geriatricians, nurses, and caregivers. This will improve the quality of healthcare provided to older individuals and ensure that the healthcare system is adequately equipped to meet the growing demands of an aging population.
- **Community-Based Care Models:** To alleviate the strain on institutional healthcare facilities and reduce costs, community-based care solutions should be promoted. This includes expanding home-based care options and community-oriented healthcare services, which not only reduce healthcare costs but also improve the quality of life for older adults by allowing them to remain in familiar environments. Community-based models can also foster greater independence and a sense of belonging for older adults.

The successful experiences of countries like Japan and Scandinavian nations can provide valuable insights for Iran. However, the models from these countries must be adapted to fit Iran's unique socio-cultural and economic circumstances. For example, **age-friendly urban planning** seen in Scandinavian countries could be applied to both urban and rural areas in Iran, with consideration for regional disparities and the distinct intergenerational dynamics that exist within Iranian families and communities (Harper, 2014). By adapting these international best practices to the local context, Iran can create policies that not only address the challenges of aging but also promote a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society for older adults.

6. Discussion

Given Iran's unique demographic transition and its socio-political implications, this study provides a critical lens through which aging can be understood in middle-income countries. By addressing gaps in policies and frameworks, the research contributes to broader debates on aging, policy coherence, and socio-economic justice in developing contexts (Bloom, Canning, & Fink, 2011).

The experiences of countries such as Japan and Scandinavian nations provide valuable lessons for Iran. However, these models must be adapted to Iran's unique socio-cultural and economic context. For instance, age-friendly urban planning in Scandinavian countries can inform similar initiatives in Iran's urban and rural areas, while accounting for the country's unique intergenerational and regional disparities (Harper, 2014).

Cultural shifts in Iran, such as urbanization and smaller family sizes, have disrupted traditional caregiving structures. Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2017) argue for policies that promote community-based support systems to fill this gap. Aging populations are often viewed as a financial burden; however, studies like those by Bloom et al. (2011) highlight the economic potential of older adults when provided with opportunities for lifelong learning and part-time employment.

One of the critical issues identified in this study is the lack of cohesive governance in aging-related policies. Comparative studies, such as Salehi-Isfahani (2012), show how fragmented pension systems in Iran fail to adequately address the financial needs of retirees, exacerbating economic vulnerability. Global best practices, including Japan's centralized approach to long-term care insurance, emphasize the importance of integrating health, economic, and social policies under unified oversight. A similar model in Iran could streamline resource allocation and improve outcomes.

Cultural shifts in Iran, including urbanization and smaller family sizes, have disrupted traditional caregiving structures. Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2017) advocate for policies that foster community-based support systems to address this gap. For instance, intergenerational housing programs in Scandinavian countries demonstrate how intentional design can foster mutual support between age groups, reduce isolation, and preserve cultural values of respect for elders.

Advancements in telemedicine and smart home systems offer scalable solutions to address healthcare and safety concerns for older adults. The World Health Organization (2020) emphasizes the role of technology in enabling seniors to age in place. Programs integrating wearable health monitors and virtual care consultations could be piloted in rural and underserved areas of Iran, ensuring equitable access to care.

Aging populations are often seen as a financial burden; however, studies like those by Sharifi et al. (2020) highlight the economic potential of older adults when provided with opportunities for lifelong learning and part-time employment. By incentivizing private sector involvement and developing re-skilling programs, Iran can harness the expertise of its senior population, promoting economic inclusion and reducing dependency.

International case studies provide valuable insights for Iran's aging policies. Japan's comprehensive long-term care system seamlessly integrates health and social services, while community-based approaches in Scandinavian countries emphasize social participation and localized care. However, these models must be adapted to Iran's unique socio-economic and cultural context. For example, implementing age-friendly urban policies must consider Iran's urban sprawl and varying regional capacities, particularly in rural and less populated areas.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges of aging in Iran and achieving more effective outcomes requires aligning policies with local conditions and drawing on international experiences to improve the quality of life for older adults.

7. Conclusions

The aging population in Iran presents both significant challenges and promising opportunities. The findings of this study underscore systemic issues such as policy fragmentation, economic pressures, and social isolation, which necessitate immediate and coordinated policy action. The lack of a cohesive strategy has limited the effectiveness of current interventions, leaving many older adults vulnerable to poverty, social marginalization, and inadequate healthcare services.

However, there is substantial potential for transformative change. By adopting a unified approach, Iran can leverage its cultural and societal strengths while drawing lessons from global best practices. The creation of a centralized governing body, the development of age-friendly cities, and the integration of community-based care models could substantially enhance the quality of life for older adults. Moreover, embracing technological advancements and fostering economic participation through lifelong learning programs can ensure that seniors continue to contribute actively to society. As Bloom, Canning, and Fink (2011) highlight, "Population aging, while often perceived as an economic burden, can stimulate productivity and economic growth if adaptive policies and programs are implemented effectively."

Addressing these issues requires strong political will, careful resource allocation, and active engagement from multiple stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, and civil society. By prioritizing the well-being of its aging population, Iran can not only address the challenges associated with demographic transition but also build a more inclusive and resilient society for future generations.

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