



BSC LEVEL 6 HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

LIVING WITH CARE: THE OLDER PERSON (BMHP6009)

ASSESSMENT 2 SUPPORTING PAPER

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Debate Standpoint.....	3
Other Views.....	4
Discussion/ Analysis.....	4
Evaluation.....	5
Recomendations.....	5
Conclusion.....	5
References.....	6

Introduction

This supporting paper reflects and discusses in-depth findings and standpoints discussed in the debate regarding the subject of an ageing population and whether this reality poses a risk of pressure on the health and social care services.

Our groups' standpoint on the debate was that the elderly population does not pose a challenge to the health and social care system and that the government is failing to anticipate and accommodate an ageing population into the workforce.

The opposing views maintained that the strain on the health and social care and welfare systems is largely caused by the older population.

Debate Standpoint

The life cycle perspective introduces the notion that old age is one more stage in the total process of the life cycle. Old age does not necessarily imply a break in time or the entry into a terminal stage, but rather it is part of a process in which the individual continues to be integrated into society, just as in previous stages he would not have, by definition, a reason to be a stage of social exclusion (Cardona and Peláez, 2012).

There is no evidence to support the idea that populations with a higher proportion of people over 65 years of age are less prosperous. Although such a scenario faces multiple challenges, these can be addressed with labour policies, medical improvements, and a great change in mentality (MIT Technology Review, 2019).

According to a study conducted by Age UK (2020), older workers are just as willing and productive as their younger counterparts and taking advantage of their experience and skills would boost the economy rather than hinder it.

Undoubtedly, scientific advancements in the healthcare sector that result in the rise of life expectancy are one of our centuries' greatest achievements, but, with longevity, we must also look for opportunities to extend our working life. Policies that focus on preventative healthcare are needed to help people remain healthy, productive, and active in later life to reduce the possibility of pressure on the health and social care sector (UK Parliament, 2015).

According to a study conducted by Dr Ros Altmann (2020) for the UK Government, there is clear age discrimination and recruitment bias that impacts workers from the age of 50. Employers must find ways to adapt to an ageing workforce to ensure they remain empowered and productive rather than relegating them to social system dependency. Approximately 2.3 million retirees expressed missing work and being useful, wished that had worked longer or that there were other options available rather than retiring, such as gap breaks, or part-time work.

The misconception that older workers deny employment to the younger generation was disproved by a release scheme implemented by the government in the 1970s. This scheme

used early retirement as a way of addressing youth unemployment. The policy failed, and economists concluded that retiring people early had the opposite effect (UK Parliament, 2015).

Other views

The ageing of the population is an issue of paramount importance in developing countries, which, according to global projections, will go from 8% in 1950 of adults over 60 years of age to 22% in 2050, while those under 15 years will go from 34% in the middle of the 20th century to 20% a hundred years later. This demographic change poses a major resource challenge: developed countries have gradually aged and are facing challenges related to unemployment and the sustainability of welfare and pension systems while developing countries are facing issues of development simultaneously with the ageing of the population (Cardona and Peláez, 2012).

From the economic point of view, demographic ageing translates into the narrowing of an active population that must support the economic dependence of a growing number of elderly people. Under these circumstances, demographic ageing is considered a true economic disaster (inexorable, moreover), with which Western countries expect to find themselves on a long-time horizon next. Within this generalized pessimism, the repercussions of the ageing of the population on social protection systems are highlighted (The National Academy of Sciences, 2012).

Discussion/Analysis

All these observations tell us that the problem of ageing is not really a demographic or a numbers problem, rarely do the problems that humanity faces have this character, it is rather a social and political problem, a problem of how we organize ourselves, how we respond to new challenges (Altmann, 2020).

In our development process, we are facing more complex problems, although certainly not more serious, which also require more sophisticated solutions. It is not certain that the health system or the pension system will overflow in the future, however, it does seem certain is that they will be institutions under constant surveillance and that as they resolve certain problems, others will arise that, in addition, will be of a more complex nature (Pérez Ortiz, 2004).

According to a report published by Age UK (2019), there are nearly 12 million people aged 65 or over in the UK; it is estimated this number will rise to 8.6 million in 50 years, roughly equivalent to the size of the population of London.

Moreover, it is estimated that by 2022 the number of workers aged 50 to state pension age will rise to 13.8 million and the population aged 16 to 49 will be reduced by 700.000 (Altmann,2020).

Evaluation

Policies that champion older workers such as the UK Governments', that abolished the default retirement age and allows to the right to extend and request flexible working, are to be encouraged to enhance the prospect of an extended working life and the possibility of a future multi-generational workforce in which flexible working and phased retirement is accepted (UK Parliament, 2015).

Pertaining the impact of Covid-19, it is estimated that the number of retirees under the age of 65 rose by 55.000 after the UK underwent the first lockdown. These figures suggest that Covid-19 has driven people into early retirement, which poses a risk to the already strained economy; moreover, early retirees could face a reduction in their annual income of £3.400 on average. However, it has been pointed out that the causes are not only the impact of the pandemic on the populations' health but on the strain caused on the labour market (Prosser, 2020).

Health issues brought forth by the virus and the increase in unemployment and redundancy continue to paint a bleak picture for the older population that wish to remain in the workforce (Jefferies, 2020).

Recommendations

The government must ensure the creation of policies that encourage employers to adapt to an ageing workforce, by retaining workers with flexible working, gap breaks or retraining.

Applying preventative healthcare to the older population could ensure that they remain productive and active in later years and addressing discrimination and recruitment age bias would allow greater numbers to remain in the workforce for longer (Altmann, 2020).

Conclusion

The world is ageing rapidly. This trend is continuing due to declining fertility rates due to a decrease in childbearing in recent decades and longer life expectancies (MIT Technology Review, 2019). The growing population ageing in countries imposes a challenging task on the government to adopt measures that address the effects of an ageing population on the system, and prepare to meet future needs with economic, institutional, political, and sociocultural policies that respond to the reality of an ageing society (Cardona and Peláez, 2012).

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