

Social problems in an aging society essay

[Sociology](#), [Bullying](#)



Arguably, since the spin of the 20th century there has been impossible demographic change in aging. Ageism is the abuse, discrimination, avoidance and stereotyping of the old people in the society (William & Julian, 2008). We are presently living in a society in which its population is growing tremendously, especially individuals over the age of 65. The modern world is probably characterized by a rapid rate of aging. Ageism comes up with different types of social problems. For example each year in America, a minimum of one million and a maximum of three million elderly people are exploited, injured and mistreated by those individuals whom they depend on for care and support. Furthermore they are set of attitudes, norms, beliefs and values which are used to justify time based discrimination, inequality and subordination. These situations are either consistent or occasional. There exist lots of challenges facing the western societies. In the modern aging society, the circumstances affecting people during growth are totally linked to the overall well-being of the society. In the community there is mounting facts that various effects of aging are neither inevitable nor irreversible. Age is one among many causes of social problems. This is because the pure older and the extremely young are more vulnerable than any other age groups in society. Problems related to the elderly include financial instability, poverty, victimization, isolation, dependency, lack of access to appropriate health care and inadequate housing (William & Julian, 2008).

Debatably, parts of the society do not work amicably as expected. Conflict is all what the society undergoes. The young and elderly are in constant competition for the limited resources. Despite the fact that the resources are

abundant in the ground, competition that each an individual faces is so difficult hence conflict is always kept in check. Whether they perceive it or not, the elderly are suppose to compete with the young for health care and resources. As competition heats up, it leads to open conflict between the young and the senior thus throwing the society into turmoil. Actually the guiding opinion of any social life is conflict and disequilibrium.

On conflict perspective, social problems are inevitable and come naturally as result of social struggle. Actually at the base of any social problem there lies strong contest over supply of privilege and power (William & Julian, 2008).

For examples in America the elderly who have retired have fought for the resources through the formation of political lobbies. According to conflict theorists the social problems associated with the elderly come in two different forms. First concerns the elderly been oppressed by the powerful in the society. The other problem comes when the elderly resist oppression and appeal to moral values.

Conflict theorists believe that the primary source of social troubles come as a result of oppression and exploitation. They consider inequality in society as a wrong and unprincipled aspect of a society. Structural-functionalist view it in a different perspective in that they view the conflicts between the aged and other members of the society as an essential for the integration and smooth running of the society. Both theories though arguing on a different perspective, believe that discrimination and stereotyping strengthens the dominant groups and oppresses the elderly. Conflict theorists see social change as continuous, immediate and inevitable as the young groups seek to replace the old in social chain of command.

Aging in the modern society is a social problem on its own. The elderly individuals in the modern society have less power and lower social status, but they cannot accept ageing as a way in which cannot be avoided at all. It is a natural way in which the human body undergoes some deterioration. In United States, an elderly generation is persistently increasing (William & Julian, 2008). This fact has significant impacts on lives of individuals and the social institutions that exist in society. The problems related to the aged are motivated by three significant factors: the notion of work as an individual value, economic hardship and labeling.

In the society each institution has a duty to fulfill. Aging has become a social problem because institutions in the modern society do not meet the needs of the elderly people who are weak. The elderly face stigmatization because they are not in a position to adapt to the society full of youth-oriented norms. Conflict theorist's review the social problems of the elderly as stemming from lack of evidence to influence societal institutions to meet their needs. The issue of modernization has changed almost all activities in the society. Many of the problems facing the aging generation in America recently emerge from the nature of modernization of the western society. The elderly face lots of challenges in the production sector. More of the work is carried out using machines which the elderly have no idea on how it operates. Ageism is not well defined in all sectors hence the elderly have no choice but to agree to negative branding that the society gives them. For example people believe that as individuals grow older their intellectual ability and capacity declines.

The society is dominated by youth and glamour therefore the actual role of

the elderly has no value. Growing old implies that there is continuous deterioration of mental and physical mechanisms that are essential for effectual performance in the community. A capitalist nation such all in the world today, old age is significantly viewed as been a handicap. The youth does not appreciate the fabulous contribution and the high positions held by the so called the “handicapped”. The elderly should be held in particularly high esteem and idolized for their knowledge, contributions, wisdom and experiences.

Perhaps age stratification has affected the elderly tremendously. In the modern society people are mostly segregated on the basis of age. This segregation limits the type of roles in which members of each cluster can hold and work on. This scenario leaves the elderly in a worse off group, leading to conflict in the society. The elderly are in the recent past been discriminated (William & Julian, 2008). Stereotypes believe that the old people are intellectually rigid, asexual, unproductive, reclusive and ineffective. Furthermore discrimination causes emotional and psychological abuse to the elderly resulting to depression and low self-esteem. Continuity of discrimination makes the elderly grow apathetically and finally withdraw from the society. Additionally age discrimination erodes senior’s confidence and dignity, finally affecting their romance and love lifestyle.

Aging comes up with drastic health issues. In most cases they are prone to highly chronic diseases. These diseases associated to old age include the metabolism of glucose in the brain and cardiac disturbance. As individuals grow old they stop or reduce their workload, therefore affecting the general lifestyle and functioning of the body. The change in lifestyles activities and

other social contacts affect morbidity and mortality. Health issues of the aging increase spending on health care programs which include medical expenses and nursing homes. This problem increases daily; this is so because the elderly face exceptionally high medical bills with decreasing or low incomes. In America the old spent twice as much on health care as their youthful counterparts, more than half of this goes to insurance (William & Julian, 2008). The elderly who are poor, women and the minority spend higher ratio of their total resources on health care.

Abuse and victimization has become part and parcel of the elderly in the 21st century. These abuses include financial exploitation, physical abuse, psychological abuse and the medical abuse. In America the elderly who are abused in one way or another is estimated to be 2. 1 million or more. Those abused at home or institutions are mostly female, whites, individuals with low income and widows.

The elderly who retire have a problem adjusting to the new environment. Retiring puts much pressure on the elderly to adjust to their new status. In the society there are no role models in which the elderly can learn from. Retirement comes with reduction of income hence spending should be adjusted in order to guarantee survival . Now days policies have been put in place which makes retirement a mandatory at a certain age. They also face extra hardships such as discrimination when seeking new jobs. Most countries have no articulate policies that deal with housing; in addition the programs that deal with health care of the elderly are inadequate and costly. Hence it is difficult for the old to enjoy their short life . The social security systems have also faced lots of criticism; it discriminates against those

elderly who are still working and women. The payments from the systems are extremely minimal to offer support to the elderly who have no other supply of income (William & Julian, 2008).

The baby boomers age group consists of individuals who were born between the years 1946-1964. Due to the shifting needs and steep statistics baby boomers will still influence the society in different ways. The world has improved on the health care to its people therefore life expectancy has increased and individual don't want to bear children hence there is a total demographic shift. Baby boomers are currently at their 40s and 50s. They have fully affected the overall age structure of society. In addition, they are the barriers to the employment of the young, this is because they have increased the average age of those who are working and the general size of labor force. Arguably, the World will still feel the impact of baby boomers in the labor sector for more years to come. Recently, baby boomers occupy the highest percentage of positions in the labor force. As baby boomers increase in work force, the percentage of the unemployed youth increases. The youth too will be growing old and when they are employed they will be of an older age. This type of trend will persist for many years.

Baby boomers are financially better off when compared to their parents. The households' real median income of baby boomers is 35-53 percent higher than what their parents had. In every society, not all people in the same class achieve the same things; some baby boomers did not perform well economically hence most of them remained poor. As the baby boomers generations ages, lots of policies should be put in place so as to help the elderly in the future. The baby boomers too faced different conditions of the

economy because of variances in their cohorts (William & Julian, 2008). Some enjoyed economic boom while others were born during economic recession. This scenario caused differences in age distribution of the economically disadvantaged and the poor in society.

The society should go beyond aging and learn more about the concept of aging. In fact we should do away with the erroneous thinking and beliefs that are associated to aging. The old have their rights and freedoms that should be respected. They are human beings hence they have sexual feelings and emotions. The elderly should not be blamed for the persistent increase in social and health care costs. The increase of health and social costs are caused by global economic crisis. The youth need to stop the stereotype thinking and listen to seniors who have wisdom and experience. The media too need to change the ways in which they portrayed the elderly in society. Media reaches many people therefore the perception of ageing can be changed easily by them.

In conclusion we expect that the society changes its negative view of the elderly. Otherwise in the meantime we should comprehend and accept that there is something inherently erroneous with the way the old in society are viewed. Very little research has been carried out to determine the causes of ageism. Therefore more concern should be put on the causes of ageism. We should not be stereotypes and only believe that it is nature taking its course. Mostly the problems of the elderly in society are compounded by a deficiency of interaction, inactivity and loneliness. The old are segregated and left alone either in retirement institutions or nursing homes away from friends and family members. Furthermore they are isolated from schools and

flow of work. This should not be the case, the elderly should be made active and interacted with family members and friends.

Reference

William, K & Julian, J. (2008). *Social Problems*, 13th Ed. New York: City University.