

Analysis of Life Satisfaction among the Elderly in Myanmar¹

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Synopsis

- Although issues related to the elderly are very important in Myanmar, research on elderly people is sparse.
- This study aims to investigate the condition of demographic aging with selected aging indicators, describes and analyzes the demographic and socioeconomic factors that influence life satisfaction among the elderly in Myanmar using descriptive statistics and multinomial logistic regression.
- In recent times, there have been an unprecedented set of challenges due to the rapid aging population in Myanmar, and Burmese people do not enjoy successful aging. Moreover, general health status, participation in any community/activity, housing ownership status, educational attainment, gender, place of residence, and marital status are the main determinants of elderly people's life satisfaction in Myanmar.
- The Myanmar government should be able to promote the quality of life of the elderly and enhance their ability to work and live independently.

Introduction

Myanmar was considered one of the most secluded nations until a series of ongoing political and structural reforms was initiated in 2010 (The Lancet, 2012). It is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia in terms of area, with a total conventional household population of 51.1 million, according to the 2019 Inter-censal Survey (ICS). Population aging and substantial increases in the numbers of elderly people are occurring throughout Southeast Asia, including Myanmar, although at different paces (Knodel & Teerawichitchainan, 2017).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) pointed out that the aging of the world's population is due to the continued decline in fertility rates and the increase in health and longevity. The current trends in aging or the rejuvenation of the population might be due to the interaction between several demographic and socioeconomic factors (Bucher, 2014).

Countries worldwide are facing an aging population, including the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Except for the Philippines, the proportion of people over the age of 65 in ASEAN is expected to triple from 2015 to 2050, according to ASEAN and United Nations data. Singapore tops the list, excepting 33.6 % of its population to be above the age of 65 by 2050. However, it is not only Singapore but also Brunei, Thailand, and Vietnam would also have 21% or more of their population in the same age range by 2050. While elderly people currently account for about 9 % of the population in Myanmar, by 2050, one-quarter of the population would be aged 60 and above. According to a ranking of ASEAN

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member countries by the percentage of the population aged 60 years in 2019, Myanmar was in the fourth place.

The changes in aggregate age structure are seen in nearly all social institutions, from firms to families. In an aging society, the well-being of the elderly is an important area for research. Life satisfaction is a multidimensional indicator connected with the political, economical, and social life of every country. It has a quite volatile formula depending on several factors, especially the specificity of each individual (Asandului & Hritcu, 2011).

Many studies have considered life satisfaction as a subjective evaluation of the general quality of life, an important factor in successful aging and an indicator of efficacy in old-age. It would be advantageous for policymakers to know how the conditions of elderly people are linked with life satisfaction (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2014). Therefore, life satisfaction among the elderly in Myanmar is studied as the main variable using demographic and socioeconomic factors of the elderly in the 2019 ICS. If elderly people are satisfied with life, they can provide wisdom and advice to younger generations and society as a whole.

Materials and methods

Measures

The variable utilized in this study is a regressor (Y), namely life satisfaction among the elderly, which is measured as satisfaction with life all, most, some, or none of the time. The explanatory variables are selected from previous literature and directly affect the value of a regressor. However, some variables were not considered in this study because they were not included in the 2019 ICS. Hence, demographic characteristics, such as gender, place of residence, age, and marital status, and socioeconomic characteristics such as educational attainment, health status, occupation, housing ownership status, currently receiving a pension, getting support, and participation in any community/activity of the elderly are used as the explanatory variables.

Data analysis

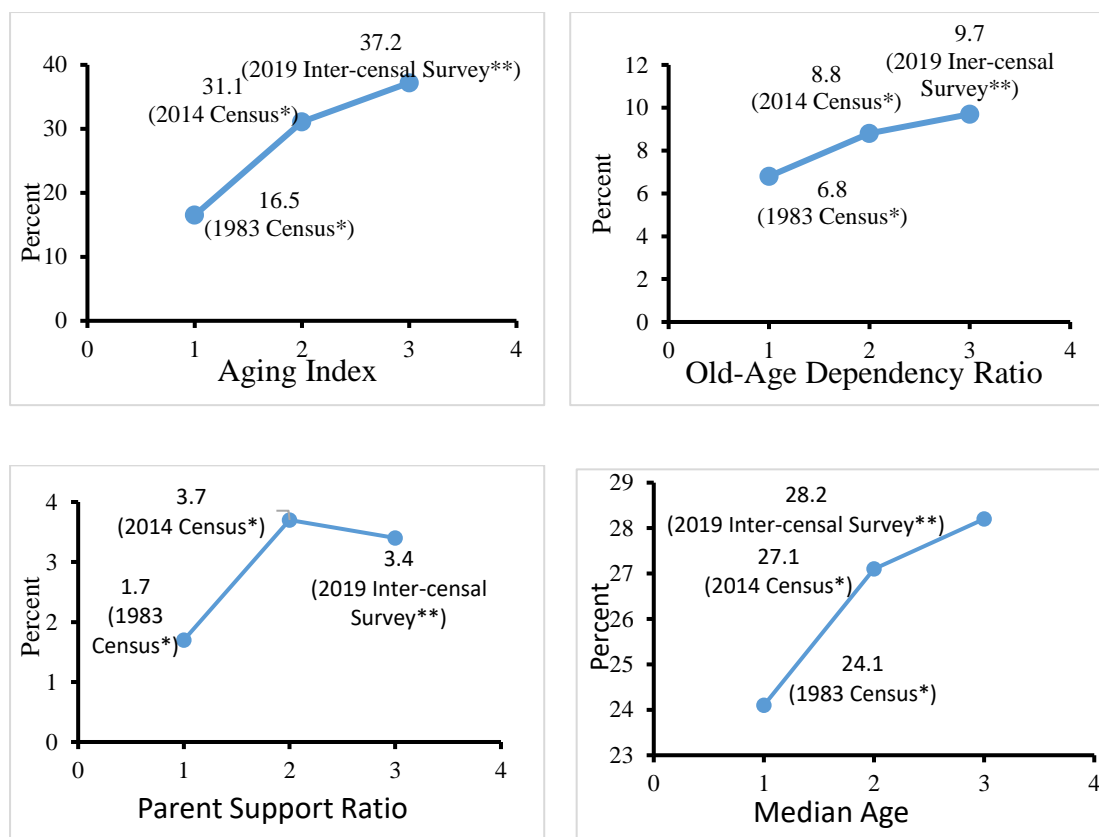
A sample of 3,0931 elderly people surveyed in the 2019 ICS was studied. Selected aging indicators, such as the aging index², old-age dependency ratio³, potential support ratio⁴, parent support ratio⁵, and median age⁶ are used to investigate the condition of demographic aging in Myanmar. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the elderly, and multinomial logistic regression is employed to analyze life satisfaction among the elderly in Myanmar. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 23.

Findings and discussion

The selected aging indicators

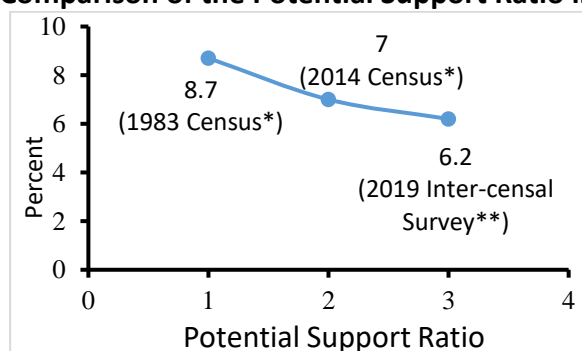
A brief description of the condition of demographic aging in Myanmar is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Comparison of the Aging Index, Old-Age Dependency Ratio, Parent Support Ratio, and Median Age in Myanmar



Source: Key Findings of the 2019 ICS

Figure 2. Comparison of the Potential Support Ratio in Myanmar



Source: Key findings of the 2019 ICS

Note: * Total enumerated population

** Population in conventional households only

According to the results, the aging index, old-age dependency ratio, parent support ratio and median age in Myanmar increased from 1983 to 2019, while the potential support ratio decreased. This would burden the economically active population who offers economic and social support to the elderly. Hence, Myanmar has begun a new phase of a rapid aging population and has been confronted with an unprecedented set of challenges related to the

rapid aging population. Therefore, it should focus on the problems related to an aging population to overcome the challenges it would face in the future.

Descriptive analysis

Almost half of the elderly (48.4%) in Myanmar are generally satisfied with their lives most of the time. Most of them are females (64.2%); 56.5% are married; 60.2% live in rural areas; and 44.1% are in good health condition and are aged 60–69 (57.5%). Among them, 66.8% have attained below primary and primary education. However, most of them are unemployed. Moreover, most participate in any community/activity (65.2%); 94.8% have their own house; 79.7% are not currently receiving a pension, allowance, or benefit; and 70.3% do not receive support from somewhere or someone. According to the results, most Myanmar people are aging healthily; however, they are not experiencing productive and active aging. This means that they are not experiencing successful aging.

Multivariate analysis

The results of the multinomial logistic regression analysis for life satisfaction among the elderly in Myanmar are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of Multinomial Logistic Regression for Life Satisfaction among the Elderly in Myanmar

Life Satisfaction among the Elderly			B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp (B)	
									Lower Bound	Upper Bound
All of the time	Gender	Intercept	−.309	.376	.676	1	.411			
		Male	−.256*	.144	3.153	1	.076	.774	.584	1.027
		Female (ref.)								
	Place of residence	Urban	.074	.150	.245	1	.620	1.077	.803	1.446
		Rural (ref.)								
	Age	60– 69	.086	.206	.174	1	.677	1.090	.728	1.631
		70–79	.004	.204	.000	1	.983	1.004	.673	1.498
		80 years and over (ref.)								
	Marital Status	Single	−.030	.253	.014	1	.907	.971	.591	1.595
		Married	.220	.150	2.142	1	.143	1.246	.928	1.674
		Other (ref.) (Widowed and divorced/separate)								

	Educational Attainment	High school and above	.451**	.217	4.318	1	.038	1.570	1.026	2.402
		Middle school	.426**	.198	4.624	1	.032	1.531	1.038	2.257
		Below primary and primary school (ref.)								
	General Health Status	Good	3.665***	.208	311.392	1	.000	39.069	26.004	58.700
		Fair	2.467***	.157	248.370	1	.000	11.791	8.675	16.025
		Poor(ref.)								
	Occupation	Employed	.379	.369	1.053	1	.305	1.461	.708	3.014
		Unemployed (ref.)								
	Housing Ownership Status	Owned	1.163***	.314	13.703	1	.000	3.199	1.728	5.922
		Rented	.361	.398	.821	1	.365	1.435	.657	3.131
		Provided free (ref.)								
	Currently receiving a pension	Yes	.076	.174	.189	1	.664	1.079	.766	1.518
		No (ref.)								
	Receiving Support	Yes	-.048	.144	.109	1	.741	.953	.719	1.265
		No								
	Participation in any community/activity	Yes	.608***	.173	12.363	1	.000	1.837	1.309	2.577
		No (ref.)								
Most of the time		Intercept	.982***	.367	7.151	1	.007			
	Gender	Male	-.307**	.143	4.614	1	.032	.736	.556	.973
		Female (ref.)								
	Place of residence	Urban	-.323**	.149	4.697	1	.030	.724	.541	.970
		Rural (ref.)								
	Age	60–69	-.010	.203	.002	1	.962	.990	.665	1.475
		70–79	-.091	.201	.206	1	.650	.913	.615	1.354
		80 years and above (ref.)								
	Marital Status	Single	-.028	.251	.013	1	.911	.972	.594	1.591
		Married	.251*	.149	2.843	1	.092	1.286	.960	1.721

Some of the time		Other (ref.) (Widowed and divorced/separated)								
	Educational Attainment	High school and above	.304	.216	1.986	1	.159	1.355	.888	2.068
		Middle school	.341*	.197	3.014	1	.083	1.407	.957	2.068
		Below primary and primary school (ref.)								
	General Health Status	Good	3.414***	.204	279.231	1	.000	30.398	20.367	45.370
		Fair	2.387***	.152	247.434	1	.000	10.879	8.080	14.647
		Poor(ref.)								
	Occupation	Employed	.303	.368	.679	1	.410	1.354	.659	2.784
		Unemployed (ref.)								
	Housing Ownership Status	Owned	1.032***	.307	11.282	1	.001	2.806	1.537	5.123
		Rented	.315	.391	.650	1	.420	1.370	.637	2.946
		Provided free (ref.)								
	Currently receiving a pension	Yes	-.018	.173	.011	1	.916	.982	.700	1.378
		No (ref.)								
	Receiving Support	Yes	.093	.143	.426	1	.514	1.098	.830	1.452
		No								
	Participation in any community/activity	Yes	.614***	.172	12.775	1	.000	1.848	1.320	2.588
		No (ref.)								
	Gender	Intercept	1.923***	.365	27.685	1	.000			
		Male	-.213	.143	2.230	1	.135	.808	.611	1.069
		Female (ref.)								
		Urban	-.307**	.149	4.268	1	.039	.735	.549	.984
		Rural (ref.)								
		Age								
	Age	60–69	-.073	.203	.128	1	.720	.930	.625	1.384
		70–79	-.180	.201	.801	1	.371	.836	.564	1.238

		80 years and above (ref.)								
	Marital Status	Single	-.121	.251	.231	1	.630	.886	.542	1.450
		Married	.128	.149	.744	1	.388	1.137	.849	1.522
		Other (ref.) (Widowed and divorced/separated)								
	Educational Attainment	High school and above	.012	.216	.003	1	.956	1.012	.663	1.546
		Middle school	.193	.197	.959	1	.327	1.212	.825	1.783
		Below primary and primary school (ref.)								
	General Health Status	Good	1.364***	.204	44.518	1	.000	3.913	2.621	5.842
		Fair	1.537***	.151	104.176	1	.000	4.653	3.463	6.250
		Poor(ref.)								
	Occupation	Employed	.282	.368	.587	1	.444	1.326	.644	2.728
		Unemployed (ref.)								
	Housing Ownership Status	Owned	.932***	.306	9.244	1	.002	2.538	1.392	4.627
		Rented	.338	.390	.751	1	.386	1.402	.653	3.010
		Provided free (ref.)								
	Currently receiving a pension	Yes	-.186	.173	1.149	1	.284	.831	.592	1.166
		No (ref.)								
	Receiving Support	Yes	-.027	.143	.037	1	.848	.973	.735	1.287
		No								
	Participation in any community/activity	Yes	.478***	.172	7.721	1	.005	1.613	1.151	2.260
		No (ref.)								

Source: The 2019 ICS

Note: ***, **, * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

The reference category = None of the time

As described by these results, indicators such as general health status with the good and fair levels, participation in any community/activity, and housing ownership status (owned) have a significant positive impact on the life satisfaction of the elderly at all, most, and some of the time compared with none of the time. Moreover, educational attainment has a significant positive impact, while being an elderly male has a significant negative impact on life satisfaction among the elderly all and most of the time compared with none of the time. Living in urban areas has a significant negative impact on life satisfaction among the elderly most and some of the time compared with none of the time. Marriage has a significant positive impact on life satisfaction among the elderly most of the time compared with none of the time.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. The Birth, morbidity, and mortality variables were not included in this study when investigating demographic aging because these variables could not be derived from the 2019 ICS. When investigating life satisfaction among the elderly, previous studies also considered living arrangements as well as emotional and mental variables (such as anxiety, depression, psychosocial trait, and self-efficacy). However, these variables were not collected in the 2019 ICS. Therefore, this study could not analyze the effect of these variables on life satisfaction among the elderly.

Conclusion

To address the challenges of rapid aging population and maintain a good quality of life among the elderly, the Myanmar government should always pay attention to their needs and problems, create suitable job opportunities, and allocate equal and sufficient resources to developmental programs for the elderly. In future studies, the analysis of life satisfaction among the elderly needs to be estimated precisely. This is because these precise estimates can assist in designing policies and programs related to the elderly. Moreover, the currently adopted national policy for them should be checked and prepared adequately.

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