

THE POPULATION CRISIS IN JAPAN: A COMPARISON WITH FRANCE

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A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Japan is home to the world's most aged society. While Japan is currently the only country to have a sizeable portion of its population over the age of 60, many developed nations are soon to face a similar population crisis. South Korea and China have already begun reporting similar population issues. The significance of this research thesis is to present information gathered in reference to both France and Japan in order to present a possible solution or remedy to the aging population. The information for this research was gathered through literature retrieval from journals and other peer-reviewed sources, which consists of over thirty articles. The results of this research are both inspiring and concerning.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1980's, Japan had experienced the 1.57 shock, which was the nation's fertility rate, the lowest point in its history, before dropping to 1.26 in 2005 (Timsit, 2019). Japan has a history of success with both the Meiji Restoration and the economic boom. Unfortunately, the Japanese have not been successful in maintaining their fertility rates. Japan is facing the world's worst case of an aging population, which is an increase in the median age and a decrease in the fertility rates. As there is a rise in the aging population crisis, what are the consequences of not remedying this crisis?

While the aging population is the worst in Japan, countries like France are experiencing the same problem. France has implemented public policy to rectify or prevent the further advancement of this phenomena. France reported a 1.98 fertility rate, the highest in the European Union as of 2007, while Japan reported a staggering 1.29 in 2004. France was successful in implementing policies to increase the total fertility rate. France accomplished this through immigration reform, family policy, and promoting a society which encourages childbirth.

To prevent the further aging population advancement in Japan, what action(s) should the country take to increase the fertility rate and decrease their aging population crisis? In order to seek remedies for this crisis, the causes leading to the present crisis are important to identify. There are a number of causes for the decreasing fertility rates, however, are they similar in affected countries, or are they different? Just like the causes, the actions taken by each country can also differ, and the effectiveness of these actions can be different. If policy implementations were successful in countries like France, can they be implemented in Japan for the same results?

Can this crisis be rectified to increase fertility rates? This thesis sets to examine a comparison between France and Japan in the success rates of policy implementation to encourage the rise in fertility rates. The comparison will be used to identify which policy recommendations may be successfully implemented in the country of Japan.

Justification of Research

As Japan is not the only country with an aging population, other nations have implemented policy to prevent or alleviate an increasing aging population crisis. In order to assure appropriate measures, the study of France, which is affected by an aging population and a low fertility rate, will be performed. Identifying factors present in countries with this same crisis, and comparing them to Japan, can indicate a pattern or highlight differences in each society. Therefore, public policy in each respective country will be researched and evaluated on the effectiveness of such policy.

This research is important as the aging population problem is facing many developed or developing nations and can affect the international community. This exercise is to compare different societies and their efforts to combat this crisis. By comparing the effectiveness of policy recommendations and implementations in different countries, outcomes can be evaluated on their success. As Japan suffers through the most severe case of an aging population, the prevention of a deepening crisis is paramount not only for Japan, but the international community as a whole.

The ageing population crisis is not only an issue for Japan, but for the global community. As education levels rise, the fertility rate decreases. In addition to the education levels, an increasing number of countries are developing all over the world, which have seen an increase in employment and a decrease in fertility rates. Japan was chosen for the purpose of this study as it is currently the most aged population. Japan is also experiencing implications relating to their increasing elderly population and declining fertility rate.

France was chosen for the purpose of this study as it faced a similar ageing population crisis but was able to shape policy and raise their total fertility rates. While Japan and France are both developed countries with advanced economies, cultural norms and practices differ among them. Younger generations of both countries face similar societal issues, but the governmental policies shaped in both countries are vastly different.

Also included within this research is insight into South Korea, which faces a similar aging crisis as Japan. South Korea has implemented policy in regard to the aged population, which may benefit Japan. China was also reviewed for this research as, like South Korea, it is a country which is also facing an aging population, and has implemented policies in response to address the issues of an aging population.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two, the literature review, is a summary of the literature utilized for the purpose of this paper. The literature review contains information from previous studies and how they relate to or supplement the findings between authors. The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader about previous studies and present a general theoretical outline for this paper.

Chapter three focuses on the population history of Japan. The chapter begins with a brief history of Japan beginning with the Edo period. The Edo period continued into the 1800s, when unfortunate events, such as famine, began to be documented. The chapter progresses from the 1600s up until the current era.

Chapter four introduces government policies from both Japan and France. This chapter explains the population similarities between France and Japan, and how policy was implemented within the two countries. This chapter also explains the differences in which both countries shaped and implemented policies, as well as the effects that policy had on population.

Chapter five of this thesis presents the idea of the aging population crisis and what it is. This chapter explains how the aging population is affecting Japan and what the island nation has done and is currently doing to remedy or impact the current issue. This chapter also presents different factors which have contributed to the aging population crisis within Japan.

Chapter six is the conclusion of this thesis. It presents a discussion in which South Korea has a similar aging population crisis and what actions the peninsula nation has taken to confront their population issues. Chapter six is concluded by presenting possible remedies in which Japan may utilize from increasing the total fertility rate of its population to the revision of its immigration policies.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Population aging is a phenomenon which is currently evolving into a crisis within the country of Japan. According to Boling (2008), Japan is the country with the fastest aging population. This sentiment is also repeated by Parsons and Gilmour (2018), when they state that Japan is the forerunner of an aging population. Parsons and Gilmour further claim that the aging population is becoming an ever-increasing burden on the Japanese society. In support, Lam (2009) argues that Japan has the most serious case of an aging population, whereas Brinton and Oh (2019) claim Japan has been below replenishment levels in fertility since the 1970s. Matsumoto and Yamabe (2013) reiterate this fact when they state that the birth rate in 1974 was 2.05, lower than the replenishment rate. The foundation for this statement is argued by the history of fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. This is a sentiment agreed upon by Muto, Oda and Sudo (2016). There is debate posed by other scholars on which country has the current rapidly aging population. Is the aging population phenomenon unique to Japan?

Higo and Klassen (2017) argue the country with the fastest aging population is South Korea, and has a more rapidly aging population than Japan. The authors did state,

however, that Japan has the world's largest share of elderly persons. According to Higo and Klassen, Japan's elderly population is expected to increase to 30.4% by 2030. MacKellar and Horlacher (2000) make the claim that Japan does possess the most rapidly aging population than any other in history. In an interesting statement made by Shimizutani (2015), the case for Japan is made ever-more interesting when history is studied. The twentieth century Japan is viewed through a scope of a population explosion where the fertility rate was high. One century later, the twenty-first century, is viewed through a scope of an aging population.

Many scholars, such as Fukuda (2003), believe that the unique social systems in Japan are a cause for the current aging population. Myunggu Jung, et al. (2020) explain that the aging population is a multifactor phenomenon which was largely influenced by advances in healthcare. Aoki (2015) further examines the aging crisis by claiming that fertility and life expectancy are not independent of each other, but are closely related. While Japan is the most extreme case of population aging, many countries around the world are facing an aging population trend. For the purpose of this research, France has been selected to compare with Japan. Martin (2007) explains that France was chosen due to a pro-natalist policy in both France and Japan to increase the fertility rate. France was also highly favorable due to a recent significant fertility recovery within the country.

Boling states that while there are differences in culture between France and Japan, people will act upon their own desires. There are several causes for the current aging population crisis, not only in Japan, but in many developed nations. Aging

population characteristics can be compared between both France and Japan. Both countries have experienced low fertility rates while also having an annual increase in the median age of their populations. While there is external pressure by each respective government for young people to marry and procreate, the financial burden and lifestyle change of marriage and childbearing may be too great.

One factor which both countries had in common was the ability of young people to find a partner. Japan has a demanding work culture which leaves many young people ages 25-44 without adequate time allocated to find a partner. While France does not experience the same work culture, the French society does have its share of causes for a low fertility rate.

As a way to combat the uncertainty of young individuals dedicating time to find a partner and eventually marry, Japan has moved to open a dating agency. Both working men and working women are regulated to following the strict work culture within Japan, therefore there is little time for matchmaking outside of their busy schedules. Watts (2002) shares that the Shimane Prefecture spent 19 million yen to promote the partnership of young people. Between 1999 to 2002, only seven couples were married and only four babies were born. The Japanese government has proposed to allocate billions of yen towards matchmaking and fertility services. A majority of scholars on this issue agree that Japan will soon not have enough workers to support pensioners, as well as the social health and welfare systems.

According to Aoki (2012) and Martin, the causes stem from marriages occurring later in life and workforce expectations. As shared previously, individuals are unable to allocate time towards their own matchmaking and ultimately are unsuccessful in finding a partner. Also coupled with the inability to find a partner is the demanding workforce culture whereas employees are expected to display loyalty to their employers. The most demanding years of career employment within Japan are between the ages of 25 to 44, the prime years for individuals to have families. The working culture in Japan is very different than that of France and many other countries.

According to Brinton and Oh (2019), employment in Japan, especially decent jobs, are often a life-long career. As it is nearly impossible within the job market for an individual to leave a job and acquire one similar or better than their last job, most individuals stay with a company. Even if the individuals are unhappy. Women are especially at a disadvantage as employers expect a woman to quit their jobs to pursue a family. Boling explains that more women in France are employed than women in Japan due solely to the workforce culture. This reality is due to the difference in the work and the societal cultures within both countries.

Boling, along with Brinton & Oh present similar arguments when on the topic of women in the Japanese workforce. The Japanese work culture expects loyalty to an employer, long hours and flexibility within the employee's role. Women are at a disadvantage due to childbearing and childrearing. Women are often denied managerial positions due to the nature of parental responsibilities. Women are often discriminated

against in the workforce as they are not viewed as potential full-time employees.

Women are expected to dedicate their time to their families with little or no time left for workplace responsibilities.

Wolf (2014) shares that Japanese women have great pressure exerted upon them by society to have children and replenish their population. Unfortunately, those who are unable to conceive are tormented by this same society who wants them to have children. Ultimately, it is not that women do not want children, according to Matsumoto and Yamabe, it is the fact that women want more children than they actually conceive. Women are culturally unable to produce more children due to employment and family cultural obligations.

Another sentiment which coincides with individual decision is the constant revisions to childcare policy. As shared by Boling, The Plus One Plan under Sakaguchi suggests that families conceive one more child. Unfortunately, such a venture is hard to impose where less people are having children due to the company before family culture of the employers in Japan. Many observers do not see an incentive for new laws on childcare when the corporate culture makes it almost impossible to have children. A statement shared by Watts, along with Brinton and Oh, is that more policies should be enacted to protect workers in seeking time off without being reprimanded by coworkers and management.

Lambert (2007) argues that childcare policies have changed too frequently, either placing too much burden on mothers or on the government. Parsons and Gilmour

believe that if there were policies to alleviate the burden of childcare, more children would be produced. There were several policies which either supported working mothers or condemned them for maintaining employment while having a child. Boling argues that social, cultural, labor markets and environments all contribute to fertility behaviors within Japan and France. Boling also argues that both France and Japan articulate each one of these potential causes differently.

Supporting this concept, France and Japan have implemented maternal and parental leave policies within their countries. France implemented their leave policies in 1992, while Japan enacted theirs in 1996. Originally, Japanese parental leave policies were created to protect employment, promote gender equity within the workplace, or to encourage employees to continue their employment after family leave (Fukuda, 2003).

In 2000, France granted 16 weeks minimum maternity leave for women with 84% of their wages granted during this period. Japan granted 14 weeks with 60% of their income. Paternal leave, while offered in both countries, is also different. France allows leave up to 3 years and an income of 3045 FRF per month after the birth of a second child. Japan offers a 1-year leave with compensation between 40-80% of wages. Unfortunately, as Brinton and Oh shares, only regular full-time employees can take advantage of this leave.

While both countries offer leave programs, childcare opportunities are vastly different in Japan and France. Boling states that policy in Japan is not nearly as generous

as policy within France. Family policy within France is also much more supportive than policy within Japan. Further complicating the differences between policy in France and Japan is that France is uncertain of which policy measures directly affected the fertility and demographics of their country (Martin, 2007). The significance of the fertility recovery in comparison to policy does not have a clear explanation or correlation. While many scholars view France as an example for Japan to follow, it is hard to decipher which policy initiatives are best due to the unclear impact of certain initiatives over others.

To remedy the aging population crisis, both Japan and France have pursued population policies designed to support families. According to Boling, both countries have educated elites to generate governmental policy to promote an increase in the respective nation's fertility rate. Martin believes that France has implemented successful family-friendly policies due to a constant fertility rate of 1.9 reported in 2007. Parsons and Gilmour reiterate this concept by claiming that Japanese political figures endorse pro-natal policies. These policies, however, again place stress upon Japanese women to conceive despite their own personal and lifestyle choices. Most projected policies ignore complex cultural norms which have contributed to the decline in fertility rates.

Expanding on causes, many scholars point to culture and preference of the Japanese society. In support, Wolf claims that there is great social pressure on women to preserve their family. Also included is the pressure from government to produce

more children. Matsumoto and Yamabe argue that the fertility rate is directly affected by a woman's preference on family size. According to research conducted by Matsumoto and Yamabe, family preference is based on the woman's social background. In comparison, Aoki describes that by providing adequately for the child(ren) is a deciding factor for women to conceive. Parenting is a very demanding role within Japanese society as parents are expected to provide total devotion and willingly sacrifice for their children.

Beyond the policies to produce more children is the possible revision of immigration policy as well as immigration reform. Aoki explains more of a need for foreign workers and immigration as a solution, than does Martin. Parsons and Gilmore express that policies relating to the aging population will be ineffective as there is a time delay between implementation and results. The argument posed in their paper is that Japan is headed for insolvency, which Aoki shared a similar sentiment within their paper.

Immigration is a common remedy seen in most of the papers researched for this topic, however it is not viewed as a cure-all for the aging population crisis. While it may alleviate the current burden of an elevated median age, it will do little in the way of fertility rates and will ultimately place a burden on the social welfare system. Peng (2016) argues that immigration reform is not only a remedy for the aging population, but also a remedy to care for the elderly population. As there is an ever-increasing aging population, there is an apparent shortage in care workers for the elderly. According to

Mizuochi (2016), most elderly in small towns do not seek medical care or assistance due to the shortage of workers and an ever-increasing travelling distance for such services. Peng believes that if immigration was relaxed for foreign workers in the medical field, that not only can these individuals assist to increase fertility rates, but also to help care for the elderly within Japan.

Unfortunately, Japan has not reached a consensus on immigration. Peng states that there is little opposition to policymaking, however, immigration is forever a stalemate issue. The Diet was successful in introducing policies to assist women in the light of maternal and paternity leave, as well as to assist families with childcare. On the other hand, the Diet is slow to enact immigration reform. In a survey conducted by Cabinet Office in 2003, 73.3 per cent of respondents agreed that elderly care is a responsibility of both the family unit and government. If this sentiment resonated within government, immigration reform would be a more viable issue to alleviate the aging population crisis. The recent sentiment from government to promote childbearing could be seen as unsettling due to state involvement under the military regime which ruled the country until the end of WWII.

Peng argues the opposition to immigration is the Japanese self-identity. This sentiment is also shared by Wolf when the argument of surrogacy is refuted. Wolf explains the requirements of citizenship, whereas at least one parent must be a citizen at the time of the child's birth. The Japanese national identity is based upon racial and cultural homogeneity. With this in mind, immigrants and foreigners would corrupt the

national identity by the introduction of differences, a heterogeneity. Interestingly, Japanese politicians must resort to trickery of the people in order to pass immigration reform. The public would either have to be comforted that immigration would not corrupt the national identity or be convinced that the only remedy to the aging population issue is immigration.

Japan has long functioned under closed-door immigration policy. The desire for immigration reform in the light of medical workers was first established in the 1990s, but did not gain momentum until the year 2000 with the release of a “2nd Basic Plan” (Peng, 2016). Public opinion surveys and media reports were conducted on the issue of immigration to bring the importance of much needed skilled workers and an increase in population to the public. Unfortunately, polls reflected negative sentiment towards foreigners and immigrants as they would corrupt the national identity.

The Japanese national identity dates back to the colonial period of Japanese history. The people believed they were the descendants of the emperor, who was a descendant of the sun goddess. A 2013 survey by NHK (Peng, 2019) presents 68 per cent of respondents believe that the Japanese people have much significantly higher qualities than people from other countries. Unfortunately, this same sentiment can garner fear and distrust of other nationalities and peoples.

In order to combat the current aging population crisis, unrealistic policies will have to be implemented to increase migration and elevate the total fertility rate. One unrealistic policy was the aforementioned dating agency. The agency only succeeded in

the birth of seven children. A consensus among authors is labor force reform in which families can earn more to promote a healthier work-life balance while providing for their families.

Shimizutani argues that the cause for population aging is coupled between the low fertility rate and higher life expectancy. Aoki claims that the burden of elderly care falls upon the younger generations who cannot live their own lives because they must work to support the dependent elderly class. This current situation is proving to be very difficult for society and government to correct. Furthermore, it is culturally unacceptable to take away from or to deny the elderly the necessities required to survive.

Parsons and Gilmour concluded that immigration is the best approach for an immediate change in the trending aging population, while increasing fertility rates will have a much slower impact on the aging population. Japan practices the admission of temporary or guest workers. These guest workers are comprised of mostly young individuals who contribute to the Japanese economy, but do not qualify for pensions or admittance into the health care system as they age.

Further exacerbating the issue of an aging population is the concentration of the age of volunteers and those who are active participants in politics. Chen (2013) argues that, based upon the 2000 census, 3 million people over 65 years of age live alone. This demographic is more likely to lack social ties which introduces the reality of lonely deaths, suicide and an increase in criminal offenses by the elderly. Unfortunately, 31 per

cent of all suicides in Japan are due to lonely elderly persons. To combat the social absence of older adults in Japan, initiatives have enacted to attract more elderly persons who volunteer. Elderly volunteerism can be viewed as a benefit to the aging population crisis as the increase in visible elderly could bring more attention to the aging population crisis.

While Japan is the forerunner in the aging population crisis, most major developing countries are facing a similar crisis. Muto, Oda and Sudo argue that the case for Japan can be expected to span the globe. Interestingly, the dependency rate in Japan in 1990 was 17 percent, the lowest among listed major developed countries. Just a short 20 years later, the dependency rate was 35 per cent, the highest among listed countries. The findings presented from the study conducted by Muto, Oda and Sudo argue that any further decline in the fertility rates would be detrimental to the future of Japan and would devastate the economy. However, MacKellar and Horlacher believe that the economic impacts of population aging are not well understood and are still heavily researched. Aoki shares that there is a very real possibility of insolvency in which the government will not be able to fund pensions as they were promised.

CHAPTER 3. JAPAN'S POPULATION HISTORY

Pre-WWII Japan

The historical aspect of Japan's population concerns began in the second half of the Edo Period, where infanticide and abortions became a norm of society. While the first half of the Edo Period can be marked with nearly unmanageable population growth, the latter half of the Edo period was quite the opposite. While population growth in the twenty-first century is a positive stimulant to a country's economy, uncontrolled population growth during the 1600s to 1800s was often wrought with negative implications.

As the Japanese population grew, so did food shortages and disease. Many rural inhabitants died due to famine and starvation. In order to reduce the population growth and prevent more deaths, many women sought out assistance to receive abortions. Also, a growing practice at the time, was the delaying of marriages or the decision of individuals to resist marriage. The population implications of such practices by its citizens were so great that the lords and ruling elite of Japan began to restrict population control.

Another form of population control was the practice on behalf of the feudal lords during the Edo period to restrict the movement of rural inhabitants to towns. The Edo district was composed of the current city of Tokyo and outlying towns and cities. As most of the country's wealthy and ruling class were citizens of Edo, the interactions between the lower classes and upper classes of society were restricted. The rural and urban populations of Japan witnessed very different policies forced upon them by the ruling elite. One measure was to restrict abortions and infanticide, as well as the institution of forced marriages (Kuroda, 1972). The end of the Edo Period came abruptly when Japan received foreign visitors from America.

In 1853, American Commodore Matthew Perry established a new relationship with the feudal lands of Japan. During this time, Japan was under the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate, which was marked by the Edo period. By 1868, a cultural revolution happened, and the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan was defeated. This revolution began the new era of Japan, also known as the Meiji Restoration. Under Meiji, the feudal lands of Japan were heavily influenced by the Western world, which affected the political and social structure of the country.

The country of Japan was transformed from a closed society into a flourishing and modernized nation. With the change in political power, new practices were implemented to govern the people and establish a change in society. Under the Meiji restoration, Japan had become industrialized and established relationships in trade with other nations. Japan had become very successful under this restoration, and the

government documented this success through economic reports and population statistics.

It was apparent that during the Meiji restoration, Japan was experiencing a massive population growth. With this growth came a larger employment base. As a result, women and children were included in the workforce, but were exposed to unsavory conditions. The Japanese government established the Factory Act of 1911 to protect women and children as they were the “future soldiers and workers” (Lambert, 2007, p. 4) of the country. Any attempts at creating policy to assist women with childrearing and population simulation all related to labor protection.

There were many changes to society as the nation’s economy grew. The population also grew with the introduction of foreign trade and relationships. A result of the new era was that fertility and mortality rates were high until the Taisho period, which began in 1912. Abortions and other contraceptive measures were still practiced at this time; however, they were not as popular as in past decades. The popularity of such practices was again to change within the next decade.

While the United States was enjoying the “roaring 20’s”, Japan was entering into an era of a lower birth rate due to declining marriage rates, food scarcity and the birth control movement. Just as many other nations who began to record their population statistics, Japan recognized the importance of surveying their citizens. As a guide for population statistics, the first national population census was in 1920, where the population of Japan was 55.96 million (Choi, Yu, & Siddharth, 2016, p. 4). During this

same time, the mortality rate began to decline. This trend was reversed in the 1930's with the "Beget and Multiply" policy which was to influence families to have five children by the 1940's (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 55).

Japan was subject to dramatic changes within its population due to over-production of children, as well as under-population of children. The policy of "Beget and Multiply" was not successful in its goal. While this statement is true in a literal sense, Japan did not conduct proper demographic research until 1940 (Boling, 2008), which was unable to report if the policy was practiced by families. The population report of 1940 concluded there were 73.114 million Japanese citizens (Choi, Yu, & Siddharth, 2016, p. 4).

Prior to WWI, policy designed to influence the population was only allowed during wartime. In order to enact policy which could affect population, there would have to had been other factors which would have been affected, such as the economy. Surprisingly, although Japan was not directly involved in the conflict of World War I, it did prevent Germany from imposing its influence into the Asian Pacific. Japan secured the sea lanes in which Germany would have utilized to spread its troops. As Europe was enveloped within the conflict of WWI, Japan experienced an enormous export-led increase in their economy as global demand shifted from Europe.

The Inter-War Years

In 1929, after the Stock Market Crash in the United States, the entire global economy was shaken. Japan was not able to shield itself from the global effects as it was

now a member of the global economy. Unfortunately, the Great Depression succeeded yet another issue which affected the Japanese population. Japan had previously experienced a rice shortage in 1910. Coupled with the Great Depression, Japan was now experiencing massive underemployment and also unemployment. Any attempts made by the government to limit the number of those who were unemployed and underemployed came in the way of contraceptives and family planning.

The economy of Japan felt both a positive and negative stimulation during the time preceding World War II to the time right after. Many Japanese engineers were employed by businesses involved with airplane production. Many of the planes constructed were bought by the Germans during World War II. Not only did Germany buy Japanese planes, but Japan also utilized the production efforts of its citizens. The income generated by plane sales were sizeable but not enough to grow the economy.

In comparison, as income generated by sales to Germany were not enough to grow the economy, the effects of waging war against the allies was met with an even greater threat to the Japanese economy. The sale of oil was forbidden to the country of Japan following its attack on Pearl Harbor. Included with the oil restriction were embargos on trade as well as the seizure of Japanese businesses and land within the United States. As Japan's biggest and only capital is their people, the island nation did not have access to fuel sources to assist in their production of weapons.

The small island of Japan became an aggressive power during WWII. The army forces invaded both China and Korea, leaving mass devastation in their wake. Beginning

in the 1930's, Japan would realize the true implications of population control with the increased desire for more manpower to join their army. The social consensus during the war was one of fascism and populism, in which the Japanese nation was superior, and its citizens were expected to give their lives for their nation.

After brutal attacks by the Japanese on Chinese, Korean and American soil, the American forces waged war upon Japan. Japanese fighters were dedicated to keeping control of their invaded territories and advancing forces. American President Truman recognized this dedication on behalf of the Japanese army and decided, with a heavy heart, to utilize the newly created atomic weapons. The devastation of these weapons on the Japanese mainland forced the Japanese emperor into an unconditional surrender to prevent the loss of more of his citizens.

POST WWII JAPAN

Directly following Japan's surrender after World War II, the country was recognized as possessing a poor or starving economy. "The foundations of Japan's current economic and legal system were established immediately after World War II" (Aoki, 2013, p. 104) and 1947 marked the beginning of the revised constitution. The legacy left by the war was visible as there was a dramatic decline in Japanese citizens, and an increase in foreigners due to the American occupation led by General MacArthur.

The American occupation did not stifle the country with revenge or retribution for Japan's brutality during the war. The occupation was recognized as promoting peace and implementing policy to stimulate the economy. The occupation established a new

relationship between The United States and Japan. Both the United States and Japan experienced a time of healing and growth after WWII, most notably, the baby boom.

The Japanese baby boom only lasted from 1947 to 1949, but would produce a “33 to 34 thousand population” (Kuroda, 1972, p. 7) increase. With this new surplus in population, the Japanese government felt the growing number of citizens could not be supported. After a sharp increase in fertility rate, the fertility rate subsequently declined after the baby boom. The fertility rate decline occurred specifically between 1949 to 1957 (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 54). The life expectancy for women was 54 years of age, while the life expectancy for men was 50 years of age. During this same time, the median population age was 22 years old (Aoki, 2013).

The fertility decline was most affected by policy regarding population regulation. Beginning in 1948, eugenics had become a popular option for women to not have children. As a direct result of the declining fertility rate, the attention towards population had shifted from population control efforts to migration concerns (Kuroda, 1972). Following in 1949, the Japanese government had instituted the *Population Problem Advisory Council*, which was given two tasks; the review of population capacity and the review of population control.

Japan had witnessed a fertility rate of “about 4 in 1945” (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000, p. 414), only to be reduced to a total fertility rate of 2 beginning in the 1950’s. Japan was the first country to see a reduction by half in its fertility rate within the

timeframe of one decade. This reduction was not due to policy, but by the popularity of abortion and eugenics.

Ultimately, the Population Problem Advisory Council concluded that population needed to be suppressed. One suggestion for suppression was to promote emigration to alleviate the carrying capacity of the population. There was a second suggested agenda coupled with emigration which also doubled as a way to stimulate the Japanese economy. The suggestion was for Japanese people to span the globe with the task of reviving and promoting foreign trade.

Along with these suggestions, the council promoted two real remedies towards population control. The first remedy was to increase the staffing and quality standards at hospitals and family counsellors, which would offer support to women and families. The second remedy was to provide free contraceptives to the poor (Kuroda, 1972). While these remedies were instituted, the Japanese Diet had also implemented policy in the way of family planning and population influence.

Interestingly, after the war, "The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) also placed great emphasis on child welfare policy and argued that children were the future managers of Japan's democracy" (Lambert, 2007, p. 7). This argument is an extension of what the Japanese government expressed prior to the Great Depression and hardships of war. While Japan was experiencing the onset of the aging population crisis, the Americans expressed the necessity of children and the future of Japan.

In 1948, the Diet had made abortions legal for families who had too many children. The Diet also proposed several economic situations in which women could seek a legal abortion if they met the criteria for one. This policy proposal was presented in 1949. Both the abortion due to excessive children and the economic situations were not to be conducted unless the individuals met certain criteria. The stipulations presented by the Diet did not last long. By 1952 the restrictions for review were lifted and no longer had to be conducted. Due to the 1952 revision, many abortions took place which caused a massive decrease in the fertility rate and a grim population outlook.

In 1956, a subcommittee of the *Population Problem Advisory Council* claimed that at the center of the population problem was employment status. With the excess of people and a limited job market, many people were severely underemployed or unemployed. The council projected that the population problem would lead to international problems affecting peace. It was believed that the excess of people would drain the economy, therefore, countermeasures should be taken.

One such countermeasure was to make abortions popular and promote them by any means necessary. Unfortunately, while the government was focused on excess population problems, they failed to look ahead to the future. The country did not account for the sharp decline which would result from their policies to control the population. While there were several immediate social benefits, the future cultural and economic implications would be great.

As a result of population control, the economy grew greatly within a short period of time. By 1966, the national income had doubled, and citizens were enjoying the benefits of a growing economy. At the same time, the total fertility rate had begun to decline while the median age of the population steadily increased. The fertility rate of women aged 30 to 34 declined rapidly as abortions and contraceptives became more available (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000). Interestingly, the *Population Problem Advisory Council* submitted their last report in 1971, claiming that population aging had already begun and will become a serious problem in the future.

Tech Boom and Modern Era

Due to large welfare spending and proposed social policies, the Japanese government had decreased social spending. As a result, Japan had created a deficit within their economy. Decreasing the deficit caused by social programs had become the most important policy issue. The government proposed to reallocate funds and called for reforms to be instituted within the welfare system. The largest expenditure that the government wanted to review was employee compensation benefits and pension reform.

As such, “Reforms included higher premiums for medical insurance and pension contributions, a postponement of pension eligibility from 60 to 65 years, and no more free health care for the elderly” (Lambert, 2007, p. 23), with an initial cut from 80% to 50% of medical premiums to be paid by the healthcare insurance. During this time, the business industry was greatly in favor of budget cuts and eliminating the debt ceiling. All

of the revisions proposed by the Diet were in favor of businesses to keep more of their money. On that same note, it was the employees which were penalized as more of their pay was to be allocated towards the pension program and healthcare.

While the economy appeared to be improving under the policy revisions, the population was changing. The practice of eugenics and abortions were beginning to become visible within society. While people who were born after World War II had experienced a growing economy, which afforded them the luxury of investing and enjoying life, society was about to change. At this same time, fewer people were having children as abortions and contraceptives became becoming popular.

Due to a decline in the fertility rate by previous generations, there were far fewer young people than there should have been to balance the population. A balanced population is one in which there are roughly equal young people as there are older people. The replacement level of a population is where there is an equal birth for every death. As a result of the decreased fertility rate, there were fewer young people to support the elderly. The first affected generation was those who were born during the 1940s and had begun to retire during the 1990s and early 2000s.

The first age related crisis was recognized in 1989. The year was noted due to an economic downturn. The economy had only gotten worse, as by 1995, the economic bubble had burst (Aoki, 2013, p. 104). This period of time began the “Lost Decade”, which spanned from 1991 to 2001. This period was a result of a stagnant economy and rising interest rates. The damaged economy greatly impacted the society and culture of

the Japanese people. Once again, social programs were to come under review by the Diet.

Japan is a society in which honors their elderly, and to decrease funding for programs which assist the elderly is socially unacceptable. It is also nearly impossible for legislatures to decrease funding as the elderly constitutes a very large voting bloc within the country. The 1990s possessed a much different population than Japan had experienced in previous decades. The average life expectancy for a man was 76 years of age, while the average life expectancy for a woman was 82 years of age. The median age of the population was 37, a 15-year increase from 1947. Revising pension and welfare policy for the elderly has become nearly impossible.

In conjunction with an aged population, the total fertility rate in 2010 was at a drudging 1.37, the lowest the country had seen up to that point. "Japan's population is aging more rapidly than any population in history" (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000, p. 413), which is largely due to the low fertility rate. The number of children born during the 1990's was one quarter of the fertility rate during the 1930's. There are several causes for this which will be reviewed later.

Along with the devastatingly low fertility rate is the life expectancy of adults experienced within the new millennium. The average life expectancy for men in 2010 was 80 years of age, while the average life expectancy for women was 86 years of age. The median population age had risen to 27, which is more than double the median age reported in 1947, and 10 years older than that of only twenty years prior.

Due to a decline in young people entering the workforce, elderly workers were faced with the responsibility of remaining within the workforce, despite governmental policy which forced retirement after a certain age. The years proceeding World War II have been wrought with many social issues, most of which are due to the fluctuations within the population.

Japan has the most aged population in the world, however, China has the largest share of an aged population (Chen, Xu, Song, Wang, & He, 2019). China and Japan both experienced a fast-paced growing economy, rapid development, and finally a sharp economic slowdown. The aging population in both countries is occurring much faster than in western countries. Also discussed later within this paper is the similarities between Japan and South Korea.

Family assistance and assistance for working mothers have been reviewed within South Korea (Choi, Yellow Horse, & Yang, 2018). Such practices have also been implemented and reviewed within France. Japan has made proposals regarding assistance for working mothers while it has drafted policy to address assistance for families. South Korea was also reviewed in respect of allocating resources and programs for the elderly populations.

CHAPTER 4. JAPAN AND FRANCE OVERVIEW

France Policy

France first acknowledged the declining birthrate of their country in 1873. Researchers concluded that a majority of the low birthrate was due to the role of the father to provide for the family (Pedersen, 1996). French feminist Clemence Royer declared that both men and women are responsible for the birthrate, not only men who desire to be or are fathers. The desire of the French government to increase the fertility rate was driven by the “danger of losing authority both at home and abroad as a result of a declining population” (Pedersen, 1996, p. 675).

Due to the fear of a depopulating society, in 1920, France had instituted oppressive laws concerning abortion and contraceptives. These laws were viewed as the most oppressive in all of Europe. Women were viewed as “mandatory mothers” (Pedersen, 1996, p. 676) during this time. Feminists of this period fought for improved rights to women and the importance of a matriarchal society in order to prevent further depopulation.

The solution for preventing further depopulation became one of fighting for equality of the sexes in France. As one example, women were banned from using any contraceptives, however, men could utilize condoms for the purpose of a contraceptive. Feminists of the time believed such an allowance for men was unfair and that the practice of giving men privilege over woman would further depress the declining population.

The French society was conflicted by two views. The predominantly patriarchal society believed it best to continue the male-dominated way of life, while feminists desired equality under the law. Women fought for equal rights, not only in the sense of raising a family, but also in society where they would have equal job opportunities and fair compensation for work and child rearing. At this same time, medical doctors in France recognized the depopulation issue being caused by death and disease. As doctors, individuals within this group did not recognize the political aspects of depopulation, only that of which could be impacted by medicine.

Aside from the medicinal approach to combatting depopulation, France contemplated a tax on single men to support women with children and families. Along with such a tax, there was a movement to penalize men under the age of 29 whom had not yet produced children. Ultimately, law was enacted whereas women could not have an abortion, nor could they have access to contraceptives. Medical doctors would have been penalized for performing or assisting women in sabotaging a pregnancy.

In the 20th Century, politicians sought to make family an incentive for men in order to secure more lucrative employment and pensions. Such an idea can be viewed today as the family unit is the basis of the country's social security (Martin, 2007). After WWI, fertility and natality became forerunning concerns for France. Children were viewed as a national good which would only serve to improve society.

France established demographic research institutes in 1945 (Boling, 2008), which aided the country to track the national fertility rate. France had experienced a declining birth rate between 1970 to 1995, a decline of nearly half from the 1960s to 1994. In 2003, the fertility rate of multi-generational females was expected to be around two children per woman. There are two main arguments for the explanation of an increase of nearly .3 children between the mid-1990s to early 2000s, and those are economic recovery and household morale, and the second is the expressed importance of childcare for families (Martin, 2007, p. 205).

As of 2007, France has been experiencing an increase in their national fertility rates. The government was successful in achieving a 5-year rate of 1.9 (Martin, 2007, p. 203). According to Martin, the fertility rate has become a pressing enough issue that France has instituted policies, which are amongst the most intensive policies impacting European countries. Children are the future, and France reiterates this notion by stating that a higher fertility rate is desirable because younger generations will support the older generations, and ultimately, the social welfare system. The societal need for

children was realized after World War II, and policy was first introduced to improve fertility rates in 1945.

Unlike Japan, France has a relaxed immigration policy, which is also assisting in increasing the fertility rate. French women have a fertility rate of roughly 1.72, while immigrants have a fertility rate of roughly 2.8 (Martin, 2007, p. 206). France has implemented public policy to support a high fertility rate and to encourage mothers to work. There are many public services which are devoted to young children to support families. Current child-care laws regulate that childcare facilities to have operating hours between 8 am and 6 pm. These operating hours place a burden on working families who work outside of normal business hours.

Aside from shaping policy to meet the demands of families and stimulating the fertility rate, France is also experiencing a shift in the lifestyles of young adults. The life cycle of French citizens drastically changed after 1975, where school age ended at 18, and these young adults would begin to experience their individual lives at a later age than individuals prior to 1975, where their individual lives typically began after adolescence.

This change in the life cycle affected young people, where women mainly live with parents until age 21 and men typically live with parents until the age of 24. The delaying of young adults leaving home also delays the age at which individuals would marry and eventually have children. The average age for men to marry is 30.4 years of age, while women typically marry at 28.3 years of age (Martin, 2007, p. 206). French

women are also enthusiastic about the prospects of returning to work after the birth of their children. Women in France have chosen to become more independent and provide more income for their families by working full-time while also parenting.

France has a very generous maternity policy. Mothers are afforded a 16 week leave after the birth of a second child, with up to 26 weeks after the third birth. Also included within this leave package, is the guarantee of 84% of the employee's salary during their leave. The parental leave also grants parents generous benefits in order to care for their child. After the birth of their child, French parents are afforded up to a three-year leave, and after the birth of their second child, they are also granted a monthly stipend of 3,045.70 francs.

While the maternal and parental leaves only cover the child to a certain age, the childcare policies within France extend beyond the time of infancy. Around 29% of children between the ages of 0 to 2 years of age attend some form of assisted childcare. The number nearly triples for children aged 3 to 5, where 99% of the children within these ages attend some form of assisted childcare.

Japan Policy

The first real population policy which came out of Japan was concerned with the concentration of populations within big cities. The policy was enacted to direct industries to build in smaller cities to attract individuals away from the bigger cities. This policy was introduced in 1962, and by 1969, the policy had become more directed to the social welfare of these smaller cities than to industrial policy.

Since 1975, Japan has tasked the Ministry of Health and Welfare with the responsibility of projecting future populations every five years. With each projection, the ministry has provided false data, often claiming that the fertility rate is higher than it actually is. Interestingly, Japan allocates more funds to family policies than France. The parental leave policy affords “Japanese workers a one-year leave at 40 percent of normal pay” (Boling, 2008, p. 310). Unfortunately, most Japanese women choose to retire from the workforce after the birth of their child, rather than accepting maternity leave and returning to the workforce.

Another factor to consider when contemplating the issue of low fertility within Japan is the work culture within Japan. While France, as well as many developed nations, have a typical workday with structured hours, Japan is much more demanding on its employees. Japanese workers are under greater pressure than France workers due to the “long work hours” (Boling, 2008, p. 312) culture.

South Korea Policy

South Korea has witnessed a greater decline in fertility rate than Japan. The total fertility rate of South Korea in 1960 was 6.0, and 53 years later it was 1.19 (Choi, Yellow Horse, & Yang, 2018, p. 251). South Korea has implemented policy to increase the total fertility rate, however, none of the proposals have been successful. Japan has experienced a similar unsuccessful attempt to increase the total fertility rate.

The government of South Korea had implemented six programs to increase the fertility rate, and most of the programs were shaped to improve the opportunities for

women to have children. The six policy areas include “maternity leave, childcare leave, family allowance, workplace daycare facilities, daycare allowance, and flexible working schedule” (Choi, Yellow Horse, & Yang, 2018, p. 252). South Korea has recognized the connection between an individual’s desire to have children in relation to the number of children they have.

South Korea also conducted studies into gender equity and the role of women within the workforce when shaping policy to increase the fertility rate. The results indicated that childcare and balanced household responsibility between the man and woman as the two main factors affecting the desire of women to have children. Public policy has been shaped to alleviate pressures on both mothers and fathers to improve the work-life balance that parents struggle through. Despite liberal policies to improve the fertility rate, there was no significant increase to the total fertility rate.

Similarities

Fertility and life expectancy are not independent of one another, they are both closely related factors. Both France and Japan have pursued policy to influence their populations. France began influencing its population through policy during the 1800s, while Japan began implementing policy to affect population since the early 1900s (Boling, 2008). France had instituted national demographic research in 1945, whereas Japan had implemented their demographic research six years earlier in 1939.

France and Japan have adopted policies to promote families and childbearing. Both countries have also constructed affordable and adequate childcare which is

available to the public. The quality of care provided by the Japanese childcare centers is better than that of France, however, France has more facilities and childcare staff than Japan. Due to a lack of facilities and staff, there are limited spaces for children within the Japanese childcare program.

As a result, more Japanese women become homemakers than French women. Many Japanese women are unable to take advantage of the childcare program as there is little chance their child will be accepted. Japanese women who cannot afford to stay home are more likely to have part-time work than French women who choose to work fulltime.

Aside from employment, lifestyles have also changed in both France and Japan. Women are choosing to live more independently, compared to settling down at a young age and having children. More women choose to live with their parents into their thirties, while working and enjoying their lives. While they live their own independent lives, these same women invest part of their time to finding their ideal mate, which they plan to marry and have a family. As an implication of this practice, less women find the ideal mate, and either marry later in life or not at all. If the couple is too old, they may be unable to produce children.

Japan Immigration Policy

Japan does not have a formal immigration policy. The country does allocate policy regarding foreigners, as Japan accepts foreign workers and students (Komine, 2018). To be allowed to work in Japan as a foreign worker, the foreigner must be skilled

in order to be considered. Interestingly, while Japan does not initially grant foreigners the opportunity to become citizens, it is not entirely impossible. If an individual is skilled enough or has married into a Japanese family, they are able to apply for citizenship after a certain length of stay within the country.

Japan does offer channels of admission to highly skilled workers. Nurses and care givers are primary targets for such immigration paths. Many individuals do not choose to extend their stay into immigration due to the country's tax policies and Japanese-style work culture. Many of the employment opportunities which may lead to citizenship have tests that every potential employee must pass. These tests are the same for everyone and are in Japanese. Many foreign workers are unable to pass such tests due to the language barrier.

Immigration reform is slow and minimal at best within Japan. The government fears losing its long and rich culture via an influx of foreigners. The "Japanese people's sense of identity" (Peng, 2016, p. 282) supersedes immigration reform. Any policy reform drafted by a politician would need to convince the public that immigration is not detrimental to their identity. In order to protect the Japanese cultural identity, Japan practices a closed-door immigration policy.

Faced with a declining birth rate and aging population, Japan will be forced to find an internal remedy to their population crisis, or to relax their immigration policies. It may be possible for Japan to remedy the crisis they are currently facing, but it is

unlikely. Many politicians fear the possibility of losing re-election, and therefore vote with the societal sentiment of culture and identity.

Ultimately, Japan would need to “Increase the birthrate or the political acceptability of immigration changes” (Parsons & Gilmour, 2018, p. 2). While public figures within Japan have endorsed more liberal immigration and pro-natal policies, the policies fail to address the causes of low fertility rates and the aging population crisis (Parsons & Gilmour, 2018, p. 10). Immigration policy is unlikely to be addressed in the wake of a population crisis.

France Immigration policy

France has implemented a more liberal immigration policy. The revised immigration policy is due in part to their decreased fertility rate. France chose to implement a less aggressive immigration policy to support the growth of their population. France has been able to increase their population size in three ways due to immigration.

The first increase to the population came with the acceptance of adult immigrants. The second increase came when France contributed the children of these adults to their population. Not only did France receive the children of the new immigrants, but also the children who were to be born shortly after arriving by these individuals who were more likely to have children than the native French. The third population increase came when the newly arrived immigrants acclimated to French society and birthed French citizens.

The total fertility rate of immigrant woman was recorded to be as high as 2.5, which is in contrast to the 1.65 total fertility rate of native French women (Boling, 2008, p. 320). By accepting more immigrants, France was able to increase the national total fertility rate. French policy had successfully achieved what it projected to accomplish.

Japan Family Policy

Family policy within Japan begins in the decades prior to WWII, first seen in 1890. While the system was extremely limited in scope, it did lay the foundation for future policy proposals. Policies regarding women and children began with mothers who would work in industry and did not have childcare for their children. Policies were constructed where mothers could work, and their children would be watched by childcare staff whose only task was to watch the children and ensure they did not get hurt. The need for such services dwindled as more men replaced women in factory and industrial work.

The motivation behind such policies was to promote a content and productive workforce. The first real legislation came in 1911, which was the Factory Act. The government granted financial assistance to childcare during time of war, such as the Russo-Japanese war. At the height of the war, there were 2,200 locations, however, by 1912, there were only 18 locations remaining. From 1920 onward, the government recognized the need for more childcare services with the increase in the economy and industrial services. Welfare concerns and labor production were the factors in which

motivated the childcare policy. The more enjoyment individuals had at home would equate to better performance at work.

1918 saw a break from the support for children when after the rice riots, family planning and birth control became the forefront of policy. Due to the horrors of death by starvation, women did not want to lose their children in such a manner. Abortion became popular through the 1920's and was not rectified until the 1930's. These policies were reversed by the enactment of the "Beget and Multiply" movement to increase fertility rates (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 54).

This policy sought to motivate each couple to have five children. Japan had realized the significant impact abortions had on the population, and proposed to rectify the declining fertility rate. With the fears of the rice shortage still relevant by this time, policy regarding both women and children were revised.

The Factory Act stated that women and children could not work longer than a 12-hour day and were forbidden from working during the night. Also introduced in this bill was a 5-week maternity leave for mothers. The law continued until it was revised in 1923. The revisions brought about a new standard in which women and children could not work longer than an 11-hour day and were not permitted to work at night. Also revised was the leave granted to mothers. Leave was extended to 4 weeks prenatal leave and 6 weeks postnatal leave, for a combination of 10-week maternity leave.

By 1938, the Social Enterprise Law allocated funds towards children in the form of supporting children's hospitals and facilities which cared for children, such as

daycares. Policy within the 1947 Labor Standards Law granted 12, later extended to 14, weeks of maternity leave and 60% of wages during leave. Along with this, wage discrimination against women was illegal, and overtime was regulated to no more than 2 hours a day or 6 hours per week. Also introduced in 1947 was the Child Welfare Law.

The Child Welfare Law sought to protect orphans and single mothers after WWII. During its beginning, the law only extended to assist children who were in need, and was later extended to all children. “The Child Welfare Law sought to ‘ensure the health and welfare of future generations’ and acknowledged that child-rearing was a social responsibility” (Lambert, 2007, p. 8), which in-turn, was meant to improve the harm inflicted to the population during the infanticide period.

The Japanese government would move to promote policies which would encourage an increase in child births. Progressive policies were instituted to assist working mothers alleviate some of the burdens affiliated with childrearing. The government would allot for needy children to attend daycares and only require families to pay what they could afford. By the 1940's, however, the demand for these services greatly exceeded supply.

As a result, a 1951 revision stated that only children who lacked care would be eligible for this program. Revisions had to extend further as the demand remained excessive. The new revisions concluded that only children who had sick or working parents would qualify for this program. Under these circumstances, the children would not have the care they required.

Unfortunately, the childcare hours offered by facilities often did not match the hours required during a workday. Childcare was typically offered for 8 hours of the day, whereas upwards of 12 hours were required for a workday. Policy had again changed in 1963, when attitudes towards childcare have shifted and society placed a higher burden on mothers to care for their children. Literature was released which stated an increase in juvenile crime and suicide rates was directly related to lack of childcare at home and from the mother. Japan has contradicted its own family policies since the establishment of the latter policies.

It is to be noted that population decline was recognized in the 1950's in Japan. Little was done in the way of rectifying this situation. The 1960's there was very little policy reaction to remedy the aging phenomenon and low fertility rate. By the 1970's, Japan realized that policy efforts had failed and there was little that could have been done to correct both issues.

The next revision to policy came in 1973 when childcare extended to infants, however, this commitment was halted with the onset of a recession. The new plan was to place most of the burden onto families with little imposed upon the state. In 1974, great pressure was exerted onto women as they were expected to be a member of the workforce while also caring for the household. As a result of female employment, 1975-1985 experienced a growth within the workforce, which was stimulated through part-time jobs employed by women. The government's response to these developments was to encourage mothers with older children to hold part-time employment. 1981, however, had experienced more turbulence against childcare and women.

Many industries which have benefitted from female employment, such as telemarketing and the service industry, had opposed stipulations placed upon them by labor policies. Firms were against paying women during maternity leave while also paying for taxes on behalf of the woman due to such leave. Legislators acknowledged the plight on behalf of industry and cancelled any efforts towards the advancement of maternity policy. The demands of working mothers were met with disapproval. To exemplify this issue, the country-wide relationship between working women and motherhood adopted a more negative relationship during the 1990's (Brinton & Oh, 2019).

Cultural workforce practices within Japan further restricts female employment. Most companies will not employ women into managerial positions, or positions of high importance, as companies fear the woman will not return after maternity leave. Employment practices are shaped where the employee owes loyalty to a company, which is crafted through intensive training and long working hours. Under such practices, the employee feels obligated to finish their work before retiring from their shift. Such practices further exacerbate the possibility of increasing the fertility rate, as individuals have no free time. The prime years of forced employee loyalty are the same as the prime fertility years of 25-44 (Brinton & Oh, 2019).

Women face discrimination not only in the workforce, but in everyday society. While the Japanese government portrays a women-friendly society, policy is often affected by cultural norms and traditions (Fukuda, 2003). As an example of poor policy, Shinzo Abe, the former prime minister, told women that they can excel within society

and to let themselves shine (Hooton, 2014). Unfortunately, the phonetic shi-ne in Japanese is a very rude way of instructing another to pass on from this life.

Many women were greatly offended by such a gesture by the prime minister, who eventually retired. Abe did vocally state that he was for the promotion of women's rights, but they were either ignored or received little attention. It is also true that there are very limited women who are members of the legislative body.

As women often do not obtain the managerial positions, or positions of higher salary, they are subject to part-time work with minimal benefits. As a result of such low compensation and opportunities, women often leave the workforce after getting married and having children. Adding more of a burden to couples who desire to have children, only full-time employees are afforded the luxury of taking advantage of maternity leave. Women who work part-time are not granted the same benefits as women who work full-time, which places more stress on couples who desire to have children.

As previously stated, maternity leave is only afforded for 14 weeks, with 60% of the employee's salary to be paid during this time. Unfortunately, most individuals who return to work do not take the full 14 weeks, nor do they receive the wage replacement during the entirety of their leave. Most companies offer some of the promised wages prior to the employee's leave, with the rest to be granted after the employee returns to work. Parental leave is another policy area in which parents do not receive what governmental policy promises. Japan grants a one-year paternity leave, where income would be based off of 40 to 80% of what the employee made prior to their leave.

Similar to the maternity leave, the paternity leave often does not last the full length of time granted, nor are the funds dispersed as policy dictates. In addition to parents not taking advantage of the full length of time granted for family leave, is the fact that most men do not take a leave at all. In fear of losing their jobs or possible demotion, men often remain in their employment rather than taking paternity leave.

The current prenatal policies are not effective enough (Aoki, 2013), and in fact are adding more burdens than alleviating them. Many Japanese find parental and maternity leave policies inadequate to fully utilize their benefits. Due to a lack of employers following policy guidelines, many employees do not take family leave.

Women have the right to choose if they want to have children, which is not an issue in and of itself, but it is an issue when it is on a national scale where women are not having enough children. Japan is facing an ethical crisis in regard to promoting and advocating for women to have children. The Japanese societal practices and cultural norms does not offer much support to women who desire to stay in the workforce while parenting. There is much incompatibility between the work-life balance for women. Women are still expected to tend the household after work, where the workforce demands for women are the same as for men.

The probability of men assisting women in housework and childrearing is low due to the burdens of the work culture. The amount of time a man spends on household responsibilities compared to women is nearly nonexistent as men spend most of their day between work and commuting. Interestingly, the fertility rate may increase if such

norms were to change. If men could assist more at home, the possibility of another birth increases.

Japan has not recognized the necessity of affordable daycare or relaxed workforce practices as factors affecting the fertility rate. While Japan has constructed a childcare system, most parents are unable to utilize such services as there is a shortage of childcare workers and limited spaces for children. Often, parents cannot afford traditional childcare, therefore mothers must stay home. With the loss of an income, the fathers typically become unable to dedicate less time to their employment, whereas they are hardly home. The opportunity costs for women to retire from the workforce to raise a family are increasing, greatly impacting the decision of women to have families. Japanese culture expects men to be ideal employees, women to be perfect mothers, and children to have a loving a caring mother (Boling, 2008).

Empirical studies have indicated that in a male-breadwinner society, the possibility of higher fertility within couples increases as men have more leisure time with their families (Brinton & Oh, 2019). The greatest likelihood of a second birth is when “the husband’s contribution reaches around 30% of total childcare time” (Brinton & Oh, 2019, p. 111), and the wife has a part-time employment. If the woman is employed full-time, the probability of a second child only increases if the husband assists in about 60% of household work.

Unfortunately for Japan, men are often shamed into devoting all of their time to their company, only leaving a measly 13% (Brinton & Oh, 2019) household labor

contribution on behalf of husbands. The work culture is a large issue factored into the causes for low fertility within Japan. Within a household where both parents work, the possibility of a second child is extremely low. The average work week for individuals can be upwards of 60 hours (Brinton & Oh, 2019).

Current childcare credits are another burden in which families face as the cost of childcare is higher than many citizens are able to afford. Monthly childcare payments are currently at ¥5,000, however music lessons alone have been reported to be as high as ¥4,700 per month (Aoki, 2013, p. 109). Japanese society often looks poorly upon mothers who do not care for their own children. There have been attempts made on behalf of the Japanese government to broaden the availability of childcare facilities, but even as the government provides services, mothers are unable to take advantage of the services. While there are waiting lists among cities for women who wish to enroll their children into childcare facilities, some women choose not to enroll their children.

While 29% of French infants are enrolled within some form of childcare, only 13% of Japanese infants within the ages of 0 to 2. There is an even wider gap within the 3- to 5-year range, whereas 99% of French children within these ages attend childcare, only 34% of Japanese children within these ages attend childcare. Women are often shamed by society into caring for their own children. Also non-existent within Japan is young women watching children as child labor laws forbid such a practice.

Japan has pledged to increase the number of childcare facilities to 800,000 locations by 2018 and to modify family leave policies to further benefit childrearing for

families (Parsons & Gilmour, 2018, p. 2). While women juggle between the independent lifestyle of having employment and the possibility of having a family, the fertility rate is declining past replacement levels. The replacement level of a country should be that when one person dies, another is born to sustain the population. With current medicine, longer lifespans, and declining fertility rates, Japan has not sustained their replacement levels, and the population is declining.

While Japan has adopted many Western traditions, such as the idea of nuclear families in cities, more traditional family settings are witnessed in the countryside. In cities like Tokyo and Osaka, it is popular for parents to utilize daycares during normal business hours to provide childcare for their children. Daycares are not free, and often place a heavy financial burden on families as they often have a base rate of ¥10,000 per month (Zhou, 2020). Kindergarten and preschool programs often cost around the same amount for childcare. While the expense of having a child greatly impacts the decision to have children, the Japanese government desires to shape policy to encourage women to have more children, while remaining in the workforce (Brinton & Oh, 2019). By attempting to shape such a policy, the government overlooks societal norms and cultural practices which pertain to the workforce culture.

Further exasperating the childcare issue is the quality of schools in which parents have to choose for their children. The overall quality of education has declined, a reflection of a decrease in funding for the younger generations, forcing parents to spend more of their financial resources to ensure their child attains a decent education.

Parents now enroll their children in tutoring lessons and private classes to further their education and help them achieve higher test scores for acceptance into better middle and high schools (Aoki, 2013, p. 110). A better education ensures a brighter future for children while also making them more competitive within the workforce.

Expectations for women to have more children are expressed, however there is not reform for employment, nor is there more incentives and funding allocated for women who have children and are unable to have a work-life balance. Previously implemented family policies have been revised to benefit employers. Gender policy has also been ignored when attempting to shape family policy.

“Several Japanese public figures endorse pro-natal policy” (Parsons & Gilmour, 2018, p. 10), however, such policies will have a high failure rate as women are culturally expected to choose between workforce participation or having a family. Childbearing is also linked to marriage. As marriages decline, so does the fertility rate. Within Japanese society, children born out of wedlock is taboo and not culturally acceptable. This results in a further declining fertility rate as “nonmarital childbearing is extremely low” (Brinton & Oh, 2019, p. 109).

Comparatively, education is another factor to consider in the fertility rate. While education is not as large a factor as the lifestyle the woman chooses, it does have an impact on the fertility rate. Highly educated married women have a slightly lower fertility rate than less educated married women, which only manages to further depress the fertility rates. Such low fertility among younger generations can be directly

attributed to two thoughts; singlehood and the decreasing possibility of families producing more than one child (Brinton & Oh, 2019).

The low fertility among working individuals is believed to be affected by three variables; the acceptance of forced working hours, the separation of work for women and having a family, and the idea of employment for mothers (Brinton & Oh, 2019, p. 121). These factors have been witnessed in Japan, China and South Korea. By accepting that men owe their loyalty to a company, a woman realizes her chances of having children decreases. This is also true in the presence of the husband, as he is less at home and more at work. This factor not only strains the chances of having more children, but places a heavier burden on the husband to contribute more to the household chores, whereas the wife has a greater burden of managing the house by herself.

The second factor which was given, was that of the wife's decision to remain employed or to have a family. As workforce practices do not grant women equal rights as men, the possibility of returning to work is low. Women are often regulated to part-time work where there are no benefits to return to after having a child. As the woman is no longer employed, the husband has greater pressure to provide for the family, and is home far less than when the wife was working. With the absence of the husband, the possibility of having more children decreases.

The final factor given was that of the possibility of women remaining within the workforce as a way to participate within society. Where the second factor pertained to women leaving the workforce to support their family, this factor pertains to women

who choose to remain within the workforce. The difference between women who decide to leave the workforce and those who decide to remain within the workforce is the type of job the woman held before they conceived a child.

If a woman held decent employment, and also has reliable relatives, she could remain within the workforce. While the existence of these women is low, there are families where both parents are employed, leaving a majority of childcare to older relatives. Unfortunately, the fertility rate among this type of family does not increase either, as both the mother and the father have less leisure time.

As a continuation of this factor, “a woman’s family size preference is strongly related to her social background” (Matsumoto & Yamabe, 2013, p. 1). Employment benefits affect whether a woman remains within the workforce. Japanese healthcare is provided through public and private hospitals or clinics. As such, healthcare is provided by a universal system, often requiring patients to provide 30% of the costs they accrue. Due to costs of healthcare and lack of benefits for mothers who do not work, women often have less children than they desire.

Work Culture

The work culture in Japan is one which places high level of stress upon their employees. Employers have shaped their workers into loyalists who are expected to devote their lives to their employment. Due to such high demands placed on employees, family life for individuals has changed. Both men and women are impacted by the Japanese work culture.

All workers, both male and female, are expected to devote themselves to their work. Such devotion and loyalty by workers are expressed through long work hours, often exceeding sixty hours per week, reaching upwards of eighty hours per week. Women are often not placed into managerial positions due to the possibility of their leave due to childbirth and childcare. When a woman gets married and has children, the expectations of their personal lives also change. Instead of a burden to devote oneself to their place of work, culture now demands that a woman dedicate themselves to their family and household. If a woman is unable to stay home due to financial needs, then she often receives a part-time job.

The idea of a part-time job is much different in Japan than in most other cultures (Boling, 2008). The concept of part-time is only realized in employee benefits as a part-time job may be as demanding as a full-time job. Part-time hours may reach or even exceed a normal 40-hour workweek. Part-time jobs differ from full-time jobs only in compensation and employee benefits such as healthcare and bonuses.

Aside from the expectation of women to leave the workforce after having children, is the attitude of women to return to the workforce. Most Japanese women prefer to stay home rather than return to their work. The work-life balance for women is challenging to navigate with the work culture of Japan. Further complicating the work-life balance is the practice for labor relations to be negotiated between unions, employers, and business organizations (Boling, 2008, p. 321). As a result of a lack of participation, workers have accepted the terms agreed upon by actors involved in labor

relations. Under negotiations, long work hours have been agreed upon to guarantee job security.

While the work culture extends mostly to men, women are not given the same opportunities. Feminist groups and labor unions have brought attention to employment discrimination against women. Unfortunately, as previously stated, little is being accomplished for women's rights.

CHAPTER 5. AGING POPULATION CRISIS

According to *Ageing International*, “the senior population in Japan is growing faster than in any other major economy” (Hetherington, 2000), a reality which has become well documented. Many Japanese citizens fear that the costs of pensions and healthcare would present a serious economic burden. These fears have materialized as the highest average lifespan was reported in 2016 by Japan, whereas the age was 83.7 (Naito & Omori, 2017). While costs are increasing for pensions and healthcare for the elderly, there is another phenomenon which is occurring.

A study conducted by Mizuochi Masaaki presented an argument which claims that Japan may be “refraining from medical care for elderly people in Japan” (Mizuochi, 2016, p. 1). Due to the declining fertility rate, the major population centers, such as Tokyo and Osaka, will begin to experience smaller populations. Not only are the larger population centers affected by a declining fertility rate, but pensioners typically retire to small towns and communities. As this happens, the population of small towns and communities will potentially grow. These shifting population centers will exacerbate the access to healthcare by the elderly.

At current, small towns and communities with less than 5,000 residents have roughly 13 doctors per 10,000 people. These statistics are not expected to adapt to the shifting populations. Currently, elderly citizens in small towns and communities do not actively access healthcare, as it is either too far to travel, or they cannot afford to travel. As a result of declining routine visits, which saves taxpayer dollars, emergency healthcare costs are rising as more severe health problems arise due to declining health checkups.

As a result of an unbalanced population, Japan must adopt policies which would address issues related to the aging population and effected economy. Not only is the aging population an issue for Japan, but the low fertility rate as well. The Diet does possess several politicians who promote pro-natal policies and advocate for improved women's rights, but there are very few of these individuals.

Causes in Japan

The most obvious cause for the aging population crisis was the popularity of abortions prior to the 1950's. Infanticide was practiced in the early 20th Century, followed by a drive to produce more children, and the cycle continued. Due to practiced abortions, the fertility rate had decreased, however, what was important for population sustainability was the ratio of the fertility rate compared to the replacement level. 1956 was the first time that Japan experienced a fertility rate which was below the level required to replenish the population for those who pass away or migrate.

Another major cause for the lower fertility rate is the fear of women born during the “fire-horse year” of 1966. Women born during this year were believed to have been cursed to have failed marriages, to mistreat men and cause the untimely deaths of both their fathers and their husbands. To counter this fear, women who were expecting girls had their pregnancies terminated. While the decline in fertility rate is a factor affecting population, the mortality rate is another factor directly impacting the issue of an aging population.

Extended life expectancy was viewed as good news for Japan; however, the quality of extended life was never realized. A healthy quality of life for individuals in Japan has been extended to 72 for males, and 78 for females (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 65), which is roughly ten years younger than the expected lifespan of Japanese individuals. This leaves a full decade in which elderly individuals will experience a poor quality of life.

The total fertility rate has been below 2.0 since 1975 and dropped to a staggering 1.57 in 1985. Unfortunately, these low numbers did not stimulate a need to produce more children as the fertility rate has declined further since the 1.57 shock. These low birth rates also translate into far fewer women being born, who themselves could have produced children. The lowest recorded occurred in 2005 with the fertility rate reported at 1.26. With such low numbers, researchers have searched for obvious causes. One such cause to explain the low fertility rate is the decision to delay marriage or not marry at all. The average age for the first marriage for both males and females has increased over the last several decades.

As the population aged, the government allocated more resources to the elderly than to programs which would have advocated for and stimulated fertility rates. One outlook for the future predicts that there will not be enough working-aged adults to support retirees within Japan (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000).

“Lifetime employment” is viewed as another cause for the aging population crisis. As people are Japan’s most valuable resource, education has become important for individuals. After employment has been secured, the idea of working for life has become nearly inescapable as companies were able to recoup funds lost in training exercises over the lifetime of the employee’s services (Aoki, 2013). Unfortunately, the lifetime employment ideal has come to an end, and temporary employment has become more popular. As the lifetime employees begin to retire, younger generations are not given the same opportunities for lifetime employment, and their wages are much lower. These younger generations not only earn lower wages, but are the base for government funding as well.

Retirement Policies in Japan

Support for pensioners will become an increasing burden as those who are supported by the employed will outnumber those who are employed. Combatting this mounting problem is a politically frustrated issue as many constituents are those who receive pensions, and will vote against any politician who may threaten their income.

In continuation of life expectancy and quality of life is the measure of what age an individual is capable to work until. It is predicted that 96% of men aged 55 to 59 are

capable of work, which may be extended to between 60 to 64 years of age depending on health. It is also predicted that 94% of men between the ages of 65 and 69 are capable of work, which may be extended to between 70 to 74 years of age depending on individual health (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 65).

The men who are actively employed in the workforce do not reflect these statistics. It is reported that 94% of males aged 55 to 59 are working, while 80% of men between the ages of 60 to 64 are employed. Also true is 54% of males between 65-69 are employed, while 38% of males between the ages of 70 to 74 are employed. An interesting comparison is made between childhood dependency and elderly dependency. 12.9 years of an individual's wages are correlated with childrearing, while 15 years of annual income is correlated with elderly care (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 68).

To alleviate the impact of the declining labor force, Japan has sought to reform governmental policies surrounding the issue of mandatory retirement. However, little attention is paid to this matter (Shimizutani, 2015). As fewer young workers are introduced into the labor market, jobs are still required to be filled and completed. Therefore, policies would be shaped to "extend working lives and delay retirement" (Higo & Klassen, 2017, p. 70). Currently, Japan has mandatory retirement once a worker has reached a certain age. The retirement age in Japan is 60, much younger than most other countries' citizens to be eligible for retirement. In most cases, after mandatory retirement, elderly workers do not leave the workforce, but seek employment in precarious part-time positions.

Beginning in the 1990s, “revenues fell short of expenditures and inflation lowered the value of previously accumulated reserves” (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000, p. 422), which greatly affected the pension system within Japan. The government instituted a pay-as-you-go venture in which pensioners are to be funded by individuals currently within the workforce. This scheme resulted in pensioners receiving more benefits than what they contributed. Under this program, individuals 60 and over are provided a flat pension. Aside from the pay-as-you-go, there is a separate pension for salary workers, which is funded by corporate pension funds.

In the program’s infancy, the government required a contribution of nearly \$130 per month by individual workers. As of 2015, the government required roughly \$250 per month by individual workers to pay into the pension funds. This requirement is extended to all working individuals, not including salary workers. These payable requirements are expected to reach almost 40% of workers income by 2025, and must be forfeited until the worker reaches the age of 59 years old. Aside from the impacts on the government-funded pension system payable by the current workforce, corporate funded pensions have also been affected. Both the government-funded and corporate-funded pensions have experienced problems with underfunded pensions.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the elderly population is defined as people who are the age of 65 and over (Development). In 2018, 28.1% of Japan’s entire population was elderly. Considering that in 1970, the elderly population made up 7.1% of the population, the elderly

population is currently three times the 1970 levels. The OECD currently projects that the elderly population in Japan will rise to a staggering “30.4% by 2030, 34.2% by 2040 and 36.3% by 2050” (Higo & Klassen, 2017, p. 73). Current levels of the elderly population account for more than one quarter of the population, and within 20 years, the elderly population will account for more than one third of the population.

One way in which Japan tried to alleviate stress on the pension system was to link it to life expectancy, which unfortunately for this proposal, keeps rising. While the average citizen is living a longer life, another option was to adjust pensions to what the beneficiary of funds contributed to the pension system. The issue of the size of the workforce to pensioners is that the size of the pensioner population will exceed the size of the workforce population. As individuals leave the workforce, there are a limited number of workers left.

Most pension-eligible individuals do not retire when they reach the age requirement, as these possible pensioners choose to remain within the workforce long after they are forced to retire. The key policy which impacts the elderly workforce in Japan is the law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons of 1986 (LSEOP) (Higo & Klassen, 2017, p. 76). The legislation is often utilized by the Japanese government to delay retirement of elderly workers. The first provision adjustment to the 1986 law happened in 1994, when the mandatory retirement age was raised from 55 to 60.

The next adjustment to the 1986 LSEOP occurred in 2004, which required employers to implement certain practices by 2013. These adjustments included increasing the mandatory retirement age, rehire on a post-retirement contract, or to abolish mandatory retirement. Most employers opted for the second provision, often times requiring a yearly contract renewal. As the retired worker was no longer subject to full-time benefits, the employer often withheld benefits and bonuses which were part of the full-time compensation package.

The most current provision to the 1985 LSEOP came in 2013 when the law required employers to rehire all retirement eligible employees who wished to continue their employment with the same company. This adjustment disqualified the discretion on behalf of employers as to whether they desired to rehire a retiree. This provision will make rehiring mandatory if the employee so chooses to continue employment. Notwithstanding mandatory retirement, elderly persons can still lead proactive and healthy lives long after retirement age. Older men typically experience an extra 12 years of disability-free life expectancy, while women experience nearly 15 years of disability-free life expectancy (Chen, 2013, p. 98).

The current employment prospects for elderly workers is dismal within Japan. As the population ages and the fertility rate declines, the nation would need to implement further adjustments to post-retiree employment. That is, unless Japan can increase the fertility rate and reverse the course of an ever-increasing aging population. Adjustments to the mandatory retirement age will not only alleviate later-life pressures among the

elderly who have lost their jobs, but will also stimulate the economy due to a shrinking younger labor force. In the present time, one older adult's pension is supported by three workers, however, by 2050, it is expected that one adult's pension would be supported by only 1.2 working persons (Chen, 2013, p. 103).

As the population ages and fertility declines, there will be, inevitably, far fewer young workers to replace the elderly workers. As an impact of this reality, the economy will face a shock where there will be no more workers, as the elderly will be ineligible for employment, nor will there be a present younger workforce to fill job openings. Unfortunately, the more pressing issue of post-retirement employment is pension eligibility. Full pensions are not available in Japan until the age of 65, which is a full five years after mandatory retirement.

Marriage

Due to monetary problems faced by younger generations, marriages are often delayed until later in life which greatly impacts the fertility rate. Marriage is an underlying cause of the low fertility rate. Japan is experiencing a population which chooses to marry later in life, which also increases the potential of individuals never being married. The delaying of marriage is a concept which affects both males and females. In 1950, the age of first marriage for men was 25.9 and 23 for women.

Marriage has become a factor affecting the fertility rate beginning in 1973 (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000). Another factor is the proportion of women who marry later in life, or never marry. Due to the status of women within Japanese society, the

fertility rate of women is expected to decline, just as the marriage rate is expected to decline. In 2013, the average age for the first marriage was 30.9 for males and 29.3 for females (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 57). The delay in marriage and increasing percentage of the never married population is drastically affecting the fertility rate.

As individuals delay the time in which they first have children, childbearing age does not move parallel to this delay, and therefore, less children have the potential of being conceived. According to statistical data supplied by Shimizutani, if the portion of never married women was added to married women whom never conceived, it would reveal that one third of Japanese women have never conceived children. Also adding to decline in the birth rate is couples who produce only one child has exceeded 10% of married couples in 2005 and 15.9% in 2010 (Shimizutani, 2015, p. 61).

Marriage behavior is predicated on an individual's socioeconomic status, and as a result, so is the fertility rate. If individuals cannot afford to commit to a marriage, they will be unable to commit to children. The ability to support a family is an important factor into deciding if a family is attainable. Marriage often leads to a family, which some individuals feel they are, or will be, unable to support. Support for a family also contributes to the small amount of births outside of marriage. Children born out of wedlock in Japan constitute for 1.9 percent of all childbirths, whereas children born out of wedlock in France constitute nearly half of all childbirths (Boling, 2008, p. 317).

Interestingly, French women are not as enamored by marriage as Japanese women. The Japanese believe that marriage leads to a happier and more enjoyable life,

where French women do not share the same amount of enthusiasm. Almost half of Japanese women believe that life is more complete if a couple has children, compared to only one quarter of French women. While this statement is still true, many younger women do not agree that they will be happiest if married with children.

Many younger women within Japan are aligning with French women in the belief that couples do not need to be married to be happy and have children. This sentiment can also be compared to the idea of the male breadwinner within Japanese society. The share of women who believe that men should financially support the house while women should manage the house fell from 71 percent to 46 percent between 1982 and 1997 (Boling, 2008). As a result of changing attitudes towards marriage and family, is the increase in the median age of first marriage and the growing number of women who were never married.

Causes in France

Fertility rates were greatly affected in the 1970's France, as a fertility rate of almost three in the mid 1960's to 1.65 in 1994 (Martin, 2007, p. 205). Women in France have promoted the reasons for a lower fertility rate is due in part to the economy and also child-care policies.

Lifestyles and life stages also have an impact on fertility rates. Childhood years were typically until the end of adolescence, however, with higher rates of high school completion and college attendance, France's youth do not begin their lives until well into their twenties. Women do not typically experience independence until the age of

21, and men do not experience independence until 24 years of age. Most young adults also live with their parents for financial support (Martin, 2007).

According to OECD data, as of 2018, 19.8% of France's population was elderly. While it is lower than Japan's elderly population, it still accounts for nearly 1/5th of the population. Given pro-natal policy within France, the future outlook for the population is much more positive than the population outlook for Japan.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Discussion

The current reality for Japan projects there is no plausible solution to counter the aging population crisis. The government has failed to produce strategies to increase the fertility rate. Ultimately, old age dependency may lead Japan into insolvency.

Mackellar and Horlacher state that many of the policy positions regarding population are strictly political. The Japanese government does not claim the aging population to be of concern to the populace. The government has not presented the dire situation in which Japan is in for the prevention of mass hysteria.

“Changes in labor practices and lifetime wage profiles will also make it possible for people to remain in the workforce longer” (Aoki, 2013, p. 111), will allow for parents to have a more manageable work-life balance. Many individuals are opting not to have children as the cost of raising children is a financial burden. The government has proposed policy to address the economic burden surrounding childcare and raising children (Fukuda, 2003). Such proposals, however, were not designed to increase the fertility rate within society. Due to the declining fertility rate policy is being shaped to

promote and support any need associated with childcare. The government desires to increase the birth rate while also encouraging women to remain within the workforce.

Adjusting policies relating to reproductive and family leave, as well as women's rights in the workforce may drastically impact the fertility rate. In South Korea, a negative correlation has been addressed between family assisting policies and career-assisting policies (Choi, Yellow Horse, & Yang, 2018). This study argues the necessity of addressing younger women's needs to have children, rather than addressing the needs of older reproductive women. A possible solution which may improve the fertility rate in Japan is to assist the younger generations with improved fertility policy, than to placate older women.

Older reproductive aged women desire improved childcare, which Japan has already implemented policy towards. Younger women concern themselves with seeking employment and commitment to their jobs to secure their positions. Policy reform within women's rights towards employment and family leave would greatly impact the fertility rate within Japan. Women are discouraged from taking family leave as they may not have a job to return to or fear repercussions from co-workers upon return. The discrimination against women in the workforce, along with underproductive childcare policies are adding serious implications to the fertility rate.

France has implemented excellent maternal and parental leave programs to encourage its citizens to have children. France implemented such policies as their fertility rate was dropping below the replacement level. Japan has the opportunity to

shape its government policy to also promote generous family leave for individuals to have children. Japan has already shifted attention to reducing discrimination within the workforce.

Foreign worker programs are a great source of improving country demographics, however the process necessary for a foreigner to become a citizen is nearly unattainable. Foreign workers are also often subject to strict testing in which is approved for the Japanese public, and foreigners tend to fail required tests for employment as most applicants are not fluent in the Japanese language (Aoki, 2013). Aoki believes that Japan will reach insolvency if the country continues on their current cultural and isolationist policies towards foreign workers. Women will search for better opportunities abroad, just as families will search for more affordable costs of living in other countries. The amount of immigrants Japan would require improving the fertility rate could destroy the Japanese culture the country has tried so hard to preserve.

Recently, more than one quarter of the Japanese population is over the age of 65. The percentage is likely to increase to above 40% by 2050 (Ishikawa, et al., 2018). Such a overwhelming aged society will place a heavy burden onto the healthcare system. Likewise, the impact of population aging on workforce productivity is not widely understood (MacKellar & Horlacher, 2000).

South Korea shifted financial responsibility for elderly care from the private sector to the public sector (Lee, Kondo, & Oh, 2018). The conclusion of their paper stated that the mental capacity of elderly is affected once they are no longer in the

workforce. A solution to the issue of elderly citizens not participating in active healthcare screenings, nor actively participating in the workforce, would be for the national government or local government to establish more community centers for the elderly citizens.

Interestingly, Japan has implemented such practices of elderly volunteerism. Current programs are concentrated most heavily towards older adults in their 50s and 60s. Such programs to proactively include elderly persons include environmental protection, activities pertaining to neighborhoods, and caring for fellow elderly people who are unable to care for themselves (Chen, 2013). The first introduction of volunteerism in Japanese society dates back to the Tokugawa Shogunate, which occurred between 1603 to 1868. Volunteers created a support system for farmers during seed-planting or harvesting. Another practice for volunteers during this time was support given to single mothers or households who were unable to support their business(es).

After the 1947-1949 baby boom, Japan took a proactive approach to support their elderly. The government established elderly clubs which provided retirees with activities. Such activities began receiving national funding in 1963 under the “Elderly Welfare Law” (Chen, 2013, p. 100). The 1960s ushered in the era of organized volunteering which was shaped to improve the “quality of life of the citizens” (Chen, 2013, p. 100). The 1970s were marked by the initiation of free schooling for the elderly, especially drafted for those who were prevented from graduating during WWII. In 1971,

legislation was shaped to help promote the employment of middle-aged and elderly persons. Shortly after in 1973, social welfare was created for the elderly to provide free healthcare for all persons 70 years of age or older, and updating pension benefits which would be awarded on a sliding scale.

However, technological advances and demographic studies conducted in the 1980s reversed the previous policies enacted to assist the elderly. The reality of an aging population forced legislation and policies to change. The free healthcare granted to the elderly was stopped and the elderly now had to cover a portion of their healthcare costs. In 1985, the government established an agency to address the aging population crisis. With the enactment of such an agency, so too was policy shaped to entertain elderly persons as to keep them active, healthy, and independent for as long as possible. In 1989, the government enacted the “Gold Plan” (Chen, 2013, p. 101), which was an initiative to enhance the quality of life for older adults to maintain healthy lifestyles and prevent healthcare costs as long as possible.

The 1989 Gold Plan was not enough to assist the economy or workforce from experiencing the burdens of the aging population. Five years after the Gold Plan, the New Gold Plan was enacted in 1994 and was designed to assist dependent adults with in-home care, and assisting independent adults remain independent for as long as possible. Along with the Gold Plan, policy towards senior volunteerism gained national focus in 1995, and was given priority as a major policy focus. As the population was still advancing in age, the government enacted yet another plan to assist the elderly

population, and it was the Gold Plan 21 which was enacted in 2000 (Chen, 2013, p. 101). The Gold Plan 21 was created to enact a publicly funded long-term healthcare insurance program to not only assist dependent older adults, but the independent older adults. This new plan required local funding to support the program, mainly paid for by municipalities.

There are many benefits to the volunteerism of older adults. Statistics claim that nearly one third of all suicides are committed by elderly persons, elderly being defined as 60 years of age or older (Chen, 2013, p. 99). Also prevented by older adult volunteerism is a lack of social ties by elderly persons. The lack of social ties generally present three major issues, which include lonely deaths, suicide, and heightened criminal acts committed by older adults. However, due to changing times and individual afflictions of older adults, senior volunteerism is declining.

As a way to counter declining volunteerism, some activities have been funded by non-profit organizations (NPOs). Such funded volunteer activities have assisted older adults who need more income but are unable to work. Another benefit to older adults who volunteer is that it is possible for them to volunteer in a hospital setting to offset some of the healthcare costs they incur. Unfortunately, NPOs are not allowed to actively participate in politics or religion, which greatly hinder the affects and outreach of organizations.

One possible solution to the elderly crisis of an aging population, costs associated with an aging population and to assist younger adults is an initiative

presented by Machida City (Chen, 2013, p. 104). Within this city, volunteers are able to participate in growing vegetables, as well as group activities such as cooking and harvesting. Such practices encourage the older adults to socialize and generate a sense of community among themselves. By enacting this same practice on a national scale, with relocating older adults to agricultural areas and erecting healthcare facilities close to these towns, many symptoms of the aging population may be satiated.

Besides policy directly impacting seniors, there are many policies which may be implemented to alleviate pressures exerted onto the younger generations, which greatly impact the elderly. While older individuals exit the workforce and begin receiving pensions, the individuals left within the workforce are taking on the responsibilities of those who have left. While there is an increased work burden, the compensation does not often rise with workload. If Japan were to implement policy which either restricted the increase in workload or increased compensation, younger workers would be impacted.

The latter option would be the wiser choice, as workload will inevitably increase, but with it, the compensation will also increase. If individuals were paid more, not only would those individuals have more funds for their families, but they will also be able to pay more into the pension systems. This option may have all-around benefits. Parents may be able to afford daycare for their children, allowing women to dedicate more time to employment, just as men may be able to spend more time at home with their families.

Aside from the benefits that families may receive, the economy may be stimulated as well. If employee payments increase, along with funding for pensions, inflation within the economy may be prevented, as there will be more funds available for working individuals, whereas the benefits paid to pensioners would stay the same. The increase in funding to the pension system would prevent insolvency within the pension system, which is currently inevitable.

Changing the Culture

Perhaps the only possible solution to increasing the fertility rate and reversing the population aging is a complete change of the Japanese culture. Such a change would include immigration policies, the work culture and gender roles. France has relaxed their immigration policies and have enjoyed an increase in their total fertility rate. There was not a significant loss of culture within French society, which is a complaint on behalf of the Japanese.

Along with changing the immigration policies, is to change the expectations of the work culture. Currently, workers are expected to devote themselves to their employment, both through paid and unpaid hours. This practice would need to stop if Japan truly wishes to increase their fertility rate. Both men and women are beholden to their employment due to a competitive job market and competition among workers. Women are forced to decide between a career and family, whereas men are expected to remain within their jobs for life while dedicating all of their time to their employer.

Proposing policy to impact and change the work culture within Japan may usher in positive change to the total fertility rate. By relaxing the expectation of the ideal worker and lifetime employment practices, both men and women would be afforded more personal time, in which they can dedicate time to finding a mate or to dedicating more time to their marriage. Aside from the benefits that individuals may receive, families would also benefit from a relaxed work culture.

Men would be also to spend more time at home with their wives, which would greatly improve family life and expectations. Wives may be afforded more freedoms to seek employment outside of the part-time and temporary employment options they currently have. Aside from relieved stress from their jobs, couples will have more time to spend at home, either having more children or caring for their children together. As stated earlier, mothers feel burdened by being forced to take all responsibility of raising their children and managing the household. If fathers are granted more free time, they would be able to spend more time at home either caring for the family or helping manage the household.

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