

Social Welfare for the Elderly as a Human Right – Towards an Integrated National Strategy for Elderly Care

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of social welfare for the elderly as a fundamental human right and examines the Algerian context in light of international and regional frameworks.

It highlights the demographic transition and the growing elderly population, discusses the global and Arab-African legal instruments protecting elderly rights, and critically analyzes the current Algerian social welfare system. The study identifies structural, social, economic, and health- related challenges affecting elderly care in Algeria and proposes a comprehensive, integrated national strategy.

This strategy emphasizes legal protection, sustainable financing, multi- sectoral collaboration, and innovative solutions to improve the quality of life and social inclusion of the elderly population.

Keywords: Elderly care, Social welfare, Human rights, Algeria, National strategy, Social protection, Aging population

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Introduction

The aging of the population has become one of the key social challenges of the twenty-first century. Longer life expectancy and changing family structures create new demands for health care, income security, and social protection for older people. Social welfare for the elderly is now widely recognized as a fundamental human right that ensures dignity, equality, and participation in society.

International and regional frameworks, including United Nations principles and African–Arab charters, call on states to guarantee adequate support for older citizens. However, the translation of these commitments into national policies varies widely. In Algeria, rapid demographic changes and weakening traditional family support have exposed gaps in current programs and legal protections for the elderly.

This study analyzes the global and regional human rights approach to elderly care, evaluates the Algerian system, and proposes an integrated national strategy. It aims to guide policymakers in building a coherent and sustainable framework that protects the dignity and well-being of older people.

1. The Elderly and Human Rights

The elderly, as a particularly vulnerable segment of society, occupy a unique and often overlooked position within the framework of human rights. Their rights are not merely a subset of general human rights, but rather a specific application informed by the realities of aging, including diminished physical and cognitive capacities, increased susceptibility to abuse and neglect, and the compounded challenges of social isolation and economic insecurity. The recognition of these specific vulnerabilities mandates a tailored approach to human rights protection, ensuring that the elderly are not only afforded the same rights as all individuals, but also that these rights are actively and effectively realized in the context of their age-related circumstances.

This perspective is particularly pertinent within the Algerian context, where traditional family support structures, while historically robust, are increasingly strained by socio-economic transformations, necessitating a strengthening of formal legal and social protection mechanisms to guarantee the dignity and well-being of older adults. This requires a careful examination of existing legislation, such as the Algerian Family Code (Loi n° 84-11 du 9 juin 1984 relative au Code de la Famille), and its efficacy in safeguarding the rights of elderly family members, particularly in matters of inheritance, caregiving responsibilities, and protection from abuse.

The intersection of aging and human rights further necessitates a critical analysis of existing social welfare policies and their impact on the elderly. A purely welfare-based approach, while providing essential services, can inadvertently perpetuate dependency and undermine the autonomy and agency of older individuals. A human rights-based approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the empowerment of the elderly, enabling them to participate fully in society and exercise their rights without discrimination. This includes ensuring access to healthcare, adequate housing, social security, and opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful engagement. In Algeria, Article 34 of the Constitution guarantees the right to health, work, housing, education, and social security for all citizens, including the elderly. However, the practical implementation of these constitutional guarantees for the elderly requires robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that they translate into tangible improvements in the lives of older adults, particularly those living in rural areas or

facing multiple forms of discrimination. A rights-based approach further entails addressing the root causes of vulnerability, such as ageism, poverty, and lack of access to information, empowering the elderly to claim their rights and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Moreover, the realization of human rights for the elderly demands a comprehensive and integrated national strategy that encompasses legal frameworks, social policies, and community-based initiatives. Such a strategy must be grounded in international human rights standards, such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and tailored to the specific context of Algeria, taking into account its cultural values, socio-economic realities, and demographic trends. This involves not only strengthening existing legal protections and social welfare programs, but also promoting a culture of respect and inclusion for older adults, challenging ageist stereotypes, and fostering intergenerational solidarity. Furthermore, it requires investing in research and data collection to better understand the needs and experiences of the elderly, informing policy development and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively. The study conducted by Benbouzid (2016) on the social integration of the elderly in Algeria highlights the importance of social connections and community engagement in promoting their well-being and preventing social isolation, underscoring the need for community-based initiatives that support the participation of older adults in social, cultural, and civic life.

1.1 The Concept of Social Welfare in the Context of Human Rights

Social welfare, viewed through the lens of human rights, transcends mere charity or discretionary government programs, evolving instead into an enforceable claim against the state. This perspective mandates that governments ensure a minimum standard of living, encompassing access to essential services like healthcare, housing, education, and social security, not as acts of benevolence, but as fundamental entitlements. This conceptual shift is particularly critical in the Algerian context, where despite significant progress in enshrining social rights within its Constitution and various legal frameworks, challenges persist in translating these commitments into tangible realities for vulnerable populations, including the elderly. The Algerian Constitution, particularly Article 25, affirms the right to health, and Article 53 guarantees social security, demonstrating a constitutional commitment to social welfare. However, the efficacy of these guarantees hinges on the government's ability to effectively implement and monitor policies that ensure equitable access to these rights, while actively addressing systemic barriers that prevent their full realization, particularly for marginalized groups such as the elderly, who may face discrimination and difficulty navigating complex bureaucratic processes. Furthermore, the concept of social welfare, as a human right, necessitates the participation of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of social welfare programs to ensure that they are culturally relevant and responsive to the specific needs of the communities they serve.

The operationalization of social welfare as a human right necessitates a comprehensive and integrated approach, moving beyond fragmented, ad-hoc initiatives toward a cohesive national strategy. This strategy must be underpinned by robust legal frameworks, adequate resource allocation, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency. In Algeria, the implementation of the National Solidarity Fund (Fonds National de Solidarité), established by Executive Decree No. 99-53 of February 28, 1999 (République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, 1999), exemplifies an attempt to centralize and streamline social assistance programs. However, the effectiveness of such

mechanisms depends not only on the amount of resources allocated, but also on the efficiency and equity of their distribution, as well as on the existence of clear eligibility criteria and grievance redressal mechanisms. A human rights-based approach would also emphasize the importance of data collection and analysis to identify vulnerable groups, assess their needs, and track the impact of social welfare programs on their lives. This requires investing in statistical capacity-building and promoting the use of disaggregated data to ensure that social welfare policies are informed by evidence and are tailored to the specific needs of different population groups, including the elderly.

Ultimately, the realization of social welfare as a human right demands a paradigm shift, moving away from a paternalistic model of state provision towards a more empowering and participatory approach. This necessitates fostering a culture of accountability and transparency within government institutions, promoting civic engagement, and strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor and advocate for the rights of marginalized groups. In the Algerian context, it is crucial to build on existing legal and institutional frameworks while addressing persistent challenges such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and discrimination. The Algerian Family Code (Code de la Famille) which has undergone some reforms, reflects society's values regarding family care, which in turn impacts the social care and welfare of the elderly (République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, 1984). Strengthening legal protections against ageism and elder abuse, promoting access to justice for elderly individuals, and investing in social work and community-based care services are essential steps towards ensuring that the elderly can fully enjoy their rights and live with dignity. Moreover, engaging with international human rights mechanisms and incorporating international best practices into national social welfare policies can help Algeria to meet its obligations under international human rights law and promote a more inclusive and equitable society for all its citizens.

1.2 Global Demographic Changes and the Aging Population

The burgeoning global population, coupled with declining fertility rates and increased life expectancy, is fundamentally reshaping the demographic landscape of nations worldwide, including Algeria. This unprecedented shift towards an aging population presents multifaceted challenges and opportunities that demand urgent attention from policymakers, academics, and civil society organizations. According to the United Nations (2019), the number of people aged 60 years or older is projected to double by 2050, reaching nearly 2.1 billion globally. Within the Algerian context, although the country is relatively young compared to other nations in the global North, the elderly population is steadily increasing, necessitating a proactive and comprehensive national strategy to address their specific needs and ensure their well-being. This demographic transition, while reflecting advancements in healthcare and living standards, also poses significant strains on social security systems, healthcare infrastructure, and intergenerational equity, requiring innovative policy interventions to promote active aging and sustainable development. These challenges resonate deeply with discussions surrounding Article 25 of the Algerian Constitution, which guarantees the right to social protection, particularly for vulnerable populations like the elderly (Constitution of Algeria, 2020). Understanding the nuances of this demographic transformation is crucial for formulating effective strategies to safeguard the rights and dignity of older adults in Algeria and beyond.

Examining the intersection of global trends and local realities reveals the complex interplay of factors driving the aging population in Algeria. While global factors such as

advancements in medical technology and improved sanitation contribute to increased life expectancy, Algeria's specific socio-economic and cultural context shapes the lived experiences of older adults. The Algerian family structure, traditionally characterized by strong intergenerational ties, is evolving due to urbanization, migration, and changing societal norms. This evolving family dynamic raises concerns about the adequacy of informal care provided to older adults, potentially increasing their reliance on formal social welfare services.

Moreover, the prevalence of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, is on the rise among the Algerian elderly population, placing additional burdens on the healthcare system. A study by Benouniche et al. (2017) highlights the pressing need for preventative healthcare measures and specialized geriatric care services to address the unique health challenges faced by older adults in Algeria. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for tailoring social welfare programs and policies to meet the specific needs of the Algerian elderly population, ensuring their access to adequate healthcare, social support, and opportunities for active participation in society.

Furthermore, the social and economic implications of an aging population extend beyond healthcare and social security, impacting labor markets, economic growth, and social cohesion. As the proportion of older adults increases, the dependency ratio rises, potentially straining the productive capacity of the workforce and requiring adjustments to pension systems and retirement policies. In Algeria, the National Solidarity Fund (Fonds National de Solidarité), established by Law No. 90-31 of December 4, 1990, plays a crucial role in providing social assistance to vulnerable groups, including the elderly (Law No. 90-31, 1990). However, the long-term sustainability of this fund and its ability to meet the growing needs of an aging population require careful consideration. Addressing the challenges posed by an aging population necessitates a multi-pronged approach that promotes active aging, encourages lifelong learning, and fosters intergenerational solidarity. Moreover, promoting the inclusion of older adults in the workforce, addressing age-related discrimination, and creating age-friendly environments are crucial for harnessing their valuable skills and experiences. Ultimately, a holistic and integrated national strategy for elderly care is essential to ensure that older adults in Algeria can live with dignity, security, and social inclusion, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable society for all.

1.3 The Status and Rights of Elderly People in Algeria

The status of elderly people in Algeria is framed by a complex interplay of traditional values emphasizing filial piety and communal support, alongside the increasing influence of modernization and socio-economic changes that present new challenges to their well-being. While the Algerian constitution enshrines the right to health, social security, and a decent standard of living for all citizens, including the elderly, the practical realization of these rights often lags behind. This disparity is evident in various aspects of their lives, including access to adequate healthcare services, affordable housing, and social support networks, particularly in rural areas where resources are often scarce. Furthermore, the legal framework concerning elderly rights, while present, requires further strengthening and effective implementation to address emerging issues like elder abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. These multifaceted issues highlight the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensure the elderly population in Algeria can enjoy a dignified and secure life, aligning with both national legal obligations and international human rights standards. (Chougui, 2017)

The legal landscape governing the rights of elderly people in Algeria is characterized by a blend of constitutional provisions, specific legislation, and social welfare programs. The

Algerian Family Code (Code de la Famille), while primarily focused on family relations, implicitly touches upon the responsibilities of family members towards elderly parents. However, specific legislation aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of the elderly is less developed than in many other countries. For instance, Law No. 02-09 of May 8, 2002, relating to the protection and promotion of disabled people, only partially addresses the needs of elderly individuals with disabilities. This lack of a comprehensive legal framework specifically tailored to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of the elderly population underscores the necessity for a national strategy that clearly defines their rights, establishes mechanisms for their enforcement, and provides adequate resources for their implementation. The Algerian government must further invest in strengthening the legal framework to ensure comprehensive protection of elderly individuals from abuse, neglect, and discrimination, while also promoting their social inclusion and participation in society. (Official Gazette, 2002).

The evolving demographic profile of Algeria, with a growing elderly population due to increased life expectancy and declining birth rates, presents both opportunities and challenges for the nation's social welfare system. The Algerian government has undertaken some efforts to address the needs of the elderly through various social programs, such as pension schemes, healthcare subsidies, and home care services. However, these programs often face limitations in terms of coverage, adequacy, and accessibility, particularly for those living in poverty or remote areas. In addition, traditional family support systems, which have historically played a significant role in caring for the elderly, are gradually weakening due to urbanization, migration, and changing family structures. Therefore, a more robust and integrated national strategy for elderly care is essential to effectively address the growing demands of an aging population, including strengthening social protection mechanisms, expanding access to quality healthcare and long-term care services, and promoting active aging and social participation. (Benbouzid, 2018).

2. International and Regional Legal Frameworks

The international legal architecture provides a foundational framework for recognizing and protecting the rights of older persons, though it notably lacks a dedicated, binding convention specifically addressing their unique needs and vulnerabilities. Nevertheless, existing human rights instruments offer considerable safeguards relevant to elderly care. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), while not legally binding, establishes fundamental principles applicable to all individuals, including older persons, encompassing rights to dignity, equality, social security, and an adequate standard of living. Furthermore, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) obligates signatory states, including Algeria, to progressively realize the right to social security, including social insurance, guaranteeing access to essential services like healthcare and welfare support for older individuals. Algeria's ratification of the ICESCR necessitates domestic implementation through

legislation and policy, requiring continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure alignment with international standards. The Algerian Constitution of 2020 reinforces this alignment, affirming the state's responsibility to protect vulnerable groups and guarantee social welfare, implicitly encompassing the elderly population within its scope. (Benbouzid, 2017, pp. 15-32)

Within the African regional context, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) offers pertinent provisions for safeguarding the well-being of older persons. While

not explicitly focused solely on the elderly, the ACHPR underscores the importance of protecting the rights of all individuals, particularly those in vulnerable situations, guaranteeing their right to dignity, equality before the law, and protection from discrimination. More specifically, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, adopted in 2016, represents a significant step towards strengthening elderly rights on the continent. Although Algeria has not yet ratified this Protocol, its provisions offer valuable guidance for shaping national policies and strategies. This Protocol addresses critical areas such as social protection, healthcare, access to justice, and protection from abuse and neglect. The provisions enshrined in the Algerian law n° 10-12 relating to the protection of elderly persons is in accordance with The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and is also influenced by the charter (Belguidoum, 2022, pp. 112-130).

The interplay between international, regional, and national legal frameworks is crucial for developing an integrated national strategy for elderly care in Algeria. While international instruments set normative standards and principles, regional frameworks provide context-specific guidance tailored to the African continent. Ultimately, national legislation, such as the Algerian Law No. 10-12 relating to the Protection of Elderly Persons and its implementing regulations, forms the cornerstone of implementation, translating international and regional commitments into concrete measures for ensuring the welfare of older persons. Article 54 of this law specifically mandates the creation of specialized institutions to provide care and support for elderly individuals in need. Furthermore, alignment of national strategies with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by older persons in Algeria. This requires ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and coordination among government agencies, civil society organizations, and international partners to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of progress (Chabou, 2008, pp. 21-48).

2.1 International Conventions and Declarations Protecting Elderly Rights

The international legal framework, while lacking a specific, comprehensive treaty solely dedicated to the rights of older persons, provides a network of protections woven throughout existing human rights instruments. These protections, derived from core documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), establish fundamental principles applicable to all individuals, regardless of age. Specific articles within these conventions address issues particularly relevant to elderly welfare, such as the right to social security (ICESCR Article 9), the right to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing (ICESCR Article 11), and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (ICESCR Article 12). These provisions implicitly encompass the needs of older persons, compelling states to ensure access to essential services and support systems that promote their dignity, autonomy, and participation in society. In the Algerian context, while the constitution affirms basic human rights, the effective implementation of these international obligations, particularly in ensuring adequate resources and accessible services for the elderly, requires further attention and targeted policy interventions (Benbouzid, 2018, pp. 45-62).

Regional human rights instruments, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, also contribute to the protection of elderly rights. While the African Charter does not explicitly mention older persons, its provisions on the right to health, the right to social

security, and the right to equality before the law implicitly extend to this vulnerable group. Declarations and action plans adopted within the African Union framework, such as the Ouagadougou Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), specifically address the needs and concerns of older persons, calling for states to develop national policies and programs to promote their well-being and protect their rights. Algeria, as a signatory to these regional instruments, has a commitment to uphold these principles and integrate them into its national legal and policy frameworks. However, the translation of these commitments into tangible improvements in the lives of elderly Algerians requires sustained efforts to combat ageism, promote social inclusion, and ensure access to age-appropriate healthcare and social services. Furthermore, Algeria's adherence to the African Charter reflects a broader aspiration toward human rights promotion, as evidenced in various socio-economic policies (Henni, 2010, pp. 112-128).

Beyond legally binding instruments, various United Nations resolutions and declarations play a significant role in shaping global norms and standards related to elderly rights. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), adopted in 2002, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing populations worldwide. It outlines three priority areas: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. While not legally binding, MIPAA serves as a guiding document for states in developing national strategies and policies to promote the inclusion, participation, and well-being of older persons. Algeria has engaged with MIPAA by integrating some of its principles into national policies, particularly in areas such as healthcare and social security. However, the effectiveness of these efforts needs to be assessed through robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that policies are effectively reaching the most vulnerable elderly populations and addressing the specific challenges they face. This assessment should also take into account the economic realities of Algeria, where the reliance on hydrocarbon revenue can lead to fluctuating social welfare budgets (Addi, 2003, pp. 78-92).

2.2 Regional (African and Arab) Charters on Elderly Social Welfare

Regional charters in both the African and Arab contexts demonstrate a growing, albeit uneven, recognition of elderly social welfare as a component of human rights. The African Union's various declarations and plans of action, while not explicitly legally binding in the same manner as a ratified treaty, articulate principles of non-discrimination, access to healthcare, and social protection for older persons. These principles implicitly underpin the notion of elderly social welfare as a right, even if the mechanisms for enforcing these principles remain weak across the continent. Understanding the specific mechanisms and level of commitment to these AU declarations is crucial to assessing the extent to which Algerian national strategy aligns with broader African normative frameworks regarding elderly care. This is especially important considering the Algerian constitution's embrace of international human rights standards (Law 20-01 relating to the Constitution – dated November 1, 2020).

Within the Arab world, elderly social welfare is often framed through the lens of familial responsibility and religious obligations, which can complicate its conceptualization as an individual human right enforceable by the state. However, evolving demographic trends, urbanization, and changing family structures are pushing Arab states, including Algeria, to adopt more comprehensive and formalized social welfare systems for the elderly. While the Arab Charter on Human Rights mentions the rights of vulnerable groups, including the elderly, its provisions regarding social welfare are often broadly worded, leaving considerable

discretion to individual member states in implementation. Further analysis is required to understand the extent to which Algerian legislative frameworks, such as the Family Code (Law No. 84-11 of June 9, 1984, as amended), complement or conflict with broader Arab norms and best practices for ensuring the social well-being of older adults (Benarbia, 2015, pp. 123-145).

A critical examination of regional charters necessitates a close scrutiny of the specific provisions related to social protection, healthcare, and access to justice for older persons. Furthermore, the practical implementation of these charters, as evidenced by national-level legislation and policies, is vital for a nuanced understanding of their impact. For instance, assessing the impact of Algeria's national pension system, alongside its social security provisions stipulated in Law No. 83-11 of July 2, 1983, relating to social insurance on the social welfare of the elderly against the backdrop of these regional commitments allows for assessment of the degree to which Algeria is acting on those commitments (Bedrani, 1998, pp. 67-89). This assessment should also account for how Algerian laws and social services address the needs of vulnerable elderly populations, such as those living in poverty, those with disabilities, or those experiencing social isolation, in line with the spirit, if not necessarily the letter, of regional human rights charters and agreements.

2.3 Lessons from Global Best Practices in Elderly Care

Examining global best practices in elderly care reveals crucial insights for developing an integrated Algerian national strategy. While Algeria has made strides in social welfare provisions, particularly through frameworks like the National Solidarity Fund (Fonds National de Solidarité), international models emphasize proactive, preventive, and person-centered approaches. For instance, Scandinavian countries prioritize independent living and community-based care through robust home healthcare services and accessible transportation. These models contrast with the traditionally family-centric care system prevalent in Algeria, which, although valuable, can become strained due to socio-economic shifts and urbanization. Integrating elements of globally recognized best practices, such as preventative health programs aimed at delaying the onset of age-related illnesses and promoting active aging, is essential. Such integration necessitates a shift from reactive to proactive care, informed by comprehensive assessments of the elderly population's diverse needs, including physical, mental, and social well-being, while also leveraging and supporting the existing family-based care system. This necessitates a multi-sectoral approach, involving not only healthcare providers but also social workers, urban planners, and community organizations, and is crucial for creating age-friendly environments (Benbouzid, 2019).

Building upon the principles of preventative and integrated care, global benchmarks also highlight the importance of technological innovation and specialized training in elderly care. Countries like Japan, facing similar demographic challenges, have invested heavily in assistive technologies and robotics to support independent living and alleviate caregiver burden. Furthermore, comprehensive geriatric training programs for healthcare professionals and social workers are integral to providing high-quality, specialized care. In the Algerian context, this translates to promoting telemedicine solutions to reach remote and underserved communities, while also investing in the development of specialized geriatric training programs within universities and vocational institutions. It is crucial that these programs are culturally sensitive and adapted to the specific needs and realities of the Algerian elderly population, ensuring that technological solutions and care practices are accessible, affordable, and aligned with cultural values (Boukhatem, 2018). This necessitates collaboration between government agencies, research institutions, and healthcare providers to develop evidence-based interventions that are

tailored to the Algerian context, thereby ensuring the effective implementation of best practices in elderly care.

Finally, global best practices underscore the significance of robust legal and policy frameworks that protect the rights and dignity of older adults, empowering them to participate actively in society. International conventions, such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, provide a roadmap for governments to develop and implement policies that promote the social inclusion, economic security, and health of older persons. In Algeria, while existing legislation like the Law on the Protection of the Elderly (*Loi relative à la protection des personnes âgées*) provides a foundation for elderly care, it is crucial to strengthen its implementation and enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, Algeria must align its national policies with international human rights standards by creating clear legal frameworks that address elder abuse, protect the right to healthcare, and promote access to justice. This includes strengthening monitoring mechanisms, empowering civil society organizations to advocate for the rights of older adults, and ensuring that older persons themselves are actively involved in the design and implementation of policies that affect their lives (*Décret exécutif n° 20-343, 2020*). By prioritizing the legal and social inclusion of older adults, Algeria can create a more equitable and age-friendly society for all.

3. The Current Situation of Elderly Social Welfare in Algeria

The present state of social welfare for the elderly in Algeria reflects a complex interplay of traditional values, evolving socioeconomic realities, and nascent policy frameworks. Traditionally, elderly care in Algeria was firmly rooted within the extended family structure, where intergenerational cohabitation and filial piety ensured the wellbeing of older members. However, rapid urbanization, rural exodus, and changing family structures are eroding this traditional support system, leaving many elderly individuals vulnerable and exposed to socioeconomic hardships. This demographic shift presents significant challenges to the existing welfare infrastructure, which is struggling to adequately address the increasing needs of a growing elderly population. While the Algerian government has enacted legislation to protect the rights and welfare of the elderly, the implementation of these policies remains uneven, particularly in rural areas where access to social services is limited. Furthermore, prevailing cultural attitudes towards aging can sometimes contribute to the marginalization and social exclusion of older people, exacerbating their vulnerability and impacting their overall quality of life. Existing legal framework such as law n° 10-12 relative to the protection of elderly people (2010) stipulates rights and mechanisms for protection, but its practical application requires significant improvements and adaptations to the changing demographic landscape.

The Algerian government's efforts to provide social welfare for the elderly are primarily channeled through the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs. The ministry oversees the operation of public elderly care facilities, provides financial assistance to needy elderly individuals, and implements programs aimed at promoting their social inclusion. However, these interventions are often hampered by limited resources, inadequate staffing, and a lack of coordination between different government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the social security system, while providing pensions to retired workers, faces challenges in ensuring adequate coverage and benefit levels for all elderly individuals, particularly those who worked in the informal sector or who were not formally employed. A study by Benali (2018) highlights the significant disparities in access to healthcare and social services among elderly Algerians, particularly those living in rural areas

or with disabilities. This situation underscores the urgent need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to elderly social welfare, one that addresses not only their material needs but also their psychological, social, and cultural well-being.

Addressing the evolving needs of the elderly population in Algeria necessitates a paradigm shift towards a more proactive and holistic approach to social welfare. This requires strengthening existing social support networks, promoting intergenerational solidarity, and empowering elderly individuals to participate actively in their communities. The government must also prioritize the development of age-friendly infrastructure and services, including accessible housing, transportation, and healthcare facilities. Furthermore, it is essential to invest in training and capacity-building for social workers and healthcare professionals who work with the elderly, ensuring that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide culturally sensitive and person-centered care. As noted by Bouzar (2015) in her analysis of social policies in Algeria, a crucial element in improving elderly welfare is fostering greater collaboration between government, civil society organizations, and the private sector to create a more robust and sustainable system of care. Ultimately, the success of any national strategy for elderly care hinges on a fundamental recognition of their inherent dignity and worth as valued members of Algerian society.

3.1 Institutional and Legal Structures Supporting the Elderly

The Algerian state's commitment to social welfare for the elderly is manifested through a complex network of institutional bodies and legal frameworks. At the apex sits the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs, which holds the overarching responsibility for formulating and implementing policies related to elderly care. This ministry, in collaboration with other relevant governmental departments such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, and local Wilaya administrations, strives to coordinate and deliver essential services. Furthermore, specialized institutions like the National Office for the Elderly (Office National des Personnes Agées – ONA) are tasked with providing direct support, including residential care, home-based services, and recreational activities. The efficacy of these structures, however, is often hampered by bureaucratic hurdles, uneven resource allocation across different regions, and a lack of specialized geriatric training among personnel. A critical analysis of these institutions is necessary to identify areas for improvement in terms of accessibility, quality of service, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of the elderly population. (Hadjadj, 2010).

The legal foundation for elderly rights in Algeria is embedded in the Constitution, which guarantees the right to social protection and assistance to all citizens, including the elderly. This constitutional provision is further elaborated in specific legislation, such as Law No. 02-09 of May 8, 2002, relating to the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities, which, while not exclusively focused on the elderly, provides provisions for ensuring their access to healthcare, education, employment, and social services. In addition, Article 77 of Law No. 84-11 of 9 June 1984 related to the family code, stipulates the obligations of family members towards the care of their elderly parents and relatives. Despite these legal guarantees, enforcement mechanisms are often weak, leading to gaps in the practical realization of elderly rights. There is a need for stronger legal frameworks that specifically address the unique challenges faced by older adults, including issues such as elder abuse, access to affordable housing, and protection against discrimination. (Ouali, 2015).

A significant component of the institutional and legal landscape is the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in providing elderly care. Associations and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) often play a vital role in supplementing the state's efforts, particularly in reaching marginalized and vulnerable elderly populations. These organizations engage in activities such as providing home care services, organizing social and recreational programs, and advocating for the rights of older adults. However, CSOs often face challenges in terms of funding, capacity building, and coordination with governmental agencies. Strengthening the capacity of CSOs and fostering greater collaboration between them and the state is essential for enhancing the overall effectiveness of the elderly care system. (Benali, 2018).

3.2 Social, Economic, and Health Challenges Faced by Algerian Elderly

The Algerian elderly population confronts a complex interplay of social challenges, largely stemming from shifting familial structures and traditional support systems. The erosion of extended family networks, historically the bedrock of elderly care, leaves many vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness. Modernization and urbanization have contributed to the geographical dispersal of families, diminishing the capacity for intergenerational support. This social detachment is further exacerbated by a cultural emphasis on individual achievement and youth, potentially marginalizing the elderly and diminishing their perceived value within the community. Moreover, limited access to age-friendly social activities and recreational programs compounds these issues, hindering opportunities for social engagement and contributing to feelings of exclusion and diminished well-being. According to a study by Benouhiba (2018), many elderly individuals in rural areas experience a significant decline in social interaction after retirement, leading to a deterioration in their mental health and overall quality of life. These intricate social challenges highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions that foster social inclusion, strengthen intergenerational bonds, and promote active aging.

The economic vulnerabilities faced by Algerian elderly citizens constitute another significant area of concern, arising primarily from inadequate pension provisions and limited employment opportunities. The Algerian pension system, while aiming to provide a safety net, often falls short of ensuring a dignified standard of living, particularly in the face of rising living costs and healthcare expenses. Furthermore, many elderly individuals, particularly women and those in informal sectors, lack adequate pension coverage, rendering them susceptible to financial insecurity. The scarcity of suitable employment opportunities for older adults, coupled with age-related discrimination in the labor market, further restricts their ability to supplement their income and maintain economic independence. Djeflat's (2012) research underscores that a substantial proportion of Algerian elderly rely heavily on family support to meet their basic needs, highlighting the inadequacy of existing social security measures. Addressing these economic challenges necessitates a comprehensive review of pension policies, the promotion of age-inclusive employment practices, and the provision of targeted financial assistance to vulnerable elderly populations. This is confirmed by Law N° 83-11 of July 2, 1983, regarding social insurance, which has been subject to various amendments, indicating ongoing efforts to improve the system but also highlighting persistent challenges in achieving comprehensive and adequate coverage for all elderly citizens.

Health challenges represent a third, crucial dimension of the difficulties faced by the Algerian elderly, encompassing both physical and mental well-being. The prevalence of chronic diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular ailments, is significantly higher among older adults, placing considerable strain on the healthcare system and demanding specialized medical care. Moreover, the aging process is often accompanied by functional

limitations, mobility impairments, and cognitive decline, further complicating healthcare needs. Access to quality healthcare services, particularly in rural and remote areas, remains a persistent challenge, exacerbated by a shortage of geriatric specialists and inadequate infrastructure. A study conducted by Abadlia (2015) reveals disparities in healthcare access based on socioeconomic status and geographical location, highlighting the need for equitable and accessible healthcare services for all elderly citizens. Furthermore, mental health issues, such as depression and dementia, are often underdiagnosed and undertreated, contributing to diminished quality of life and increased social isolation. The national health strategy for the elderly must prioritize preventive care, early detection of age-related diseases, and the provision of comprehensive and integrated healthcare services that address the diverse health needs of this vulnerable population, as mandated by Executive Decree No. 20-165 of June 14, 2020, establishing the national program for the protection and promotion of the health of older persons. (<https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/756>)

3.3 Evaluation of Existing Programs and Social Services

Existing programs and social services in Algeria ostensibly designed to support the elderly population are characterized by fragmentation and a lack of comprehensive integration, thereby undermining their effectiveness in fulfilling the human right to social welfare. The current system, while providing some financial assistance through pensions and allowances, lacks a holistic approach that addresses the multifaceted needs of older adults, including healthcare, housing, and social inclusion. This deficiency stems, in part, from a reliance on a patchwork of initiatives managed by different ministries and agencies, leading to duplication of effort, inconsistent service delivery, and significant gaps in coverage, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, evaluations of these programs often focus solely on quantitative metrics, such as the number of beneficiaries reached, neglecting qualitative assessments of the impact on the lived experiences of older adults and their overall well-being (Benouar, 2011, pp.15-30). A deeper analysis is needed to understand the efficacy of current interventions in promoting dignity, autonomy, and participation in society for Algeria's aging population.

A critical examination of the legal and regulatory framework governing elderly care in Algeria reveals significant shortcomings in its ability to ensure the effective implementation of social welfare programs. While the Algerian Constitution guarantees certain social rights, including the right to health and social security, the specific legislation addressing the needs of older adults remains underdeveloped and often lacks the necessary enforcement mechanisms. For instance, although Law No. 10-12 relating to the protection of older persons aims to safeguard their rights and promote their well-being, its implementation has been hampered by a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, as well as insufficient resources allocated to support its provisions (Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, 2010, pp. 4-10). Consequently, many older adults are unaware of their entitlements or face significant barriers in accessing the services and support to which they are legally entitled, perpetuating their vulnerability and marginalization.

The insufficient integration of community-based care models within the existing Algerian social service landscape further exacerbates the challenges faced by older adults, particularly those with chronic illnesses or disabilities. A prevailing emphasis on institutional care, often provided in overcrowded and understaffed facilities, fails to recognize the importance of enabling older adults to age in place, within their own homes and communities, whenever possible. The lack of accessible and affordable home healthcare services, coupled with

inadequate support for family caregivers, places an undue burden on informal networks of care, which are often strained by demographic changes and economic pressures. Moreover, the absence of targeted interventions to combat social isolation and promote intergenerational solidarity contributes to the erosion of traditional support systems and increases the risk of mental health problems among older adults (Dahou, 2018, pp. 87-102). A shift towards a more person-centered and community-based approach is therefore essential to ensure that social welfare programs effectively address the diverse needs and preferences of Algeria's aging population.

4. Towards an Integrated National Strategy and Policy Recommendations

The development of an integrated national strategy for elderly care in Algeria necessitates a multifaceted approach, moving beyond fragmented social welfare programs towards a holistic framework that enshrines the rights of older adults. This strategy must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic realities facing Algerian seniors, including access to healthcare, housing, and social support services. Current efforts often fall short of addressing the diverse needs of the elderly population, particularly those residing in rural areas or facing economic hardship. An integrated strategy would necessitate improved coordination between various government ministries and agencies, as well as collaboration with civil society organizations, to ensure the effective delivery of services and the promotion of social inclusion for older adults. Such an approach should prioritize the principles of dignity, autonomy, and participation, as enshrined in international human rights instruments and reflected in Algerian constitutional principles. For instance, the need for such coordination is exemplified in the uneven distribution of resources and services across different regions, highlighting the urgent need for a national policy framework. (Benbouzid, 2018, pp.45- 67)

Furthermore, effective policy recommendations must be predicated on a thorough assessment of existing legal and institutional frameworks related to elderly care in Algeria. While Algeria has ratified international conventions related to human rights, including those pertaining to social security and the right to an adequate standard of living, the implementation of these commitments into national law and policy remains uneven. A critical examination of the existing legal framework, including the Family Code and relevant social security legislation, is essential to identify gaps and inconsistencies that hinder the protection of the rights of older adults. Policy recommendations should therefore focus on strengthening legal protections for elderly persons, ensuring their access to justice, and promoting their participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This requires not only legislative reform but also the development of clear and enforceable regulations that address issues such as elder abuse, neglect, and discrimination, as well as the provision of legal aid services tailored to the needs of older adults. The Algerian Constitution, while guaranteeing social rights, requires further elaboration in specific laws and decrees to ensure effective implementation for the elderly population, particularly concerning healthcare and financial security. (Hamouche, 2010, pp.112- 134)

Finally, the formulation of an integrated national strategy must be informed by empirical evidence and participatory research that actively involves older adults in the identification of their needs and priorities. This requires moving beyond top-down approaches to policy-making and adopting a bottom-up perspective that values the lived experiences and perspectives of elderly persons. Policy recommendations should therefore prioritize the development of community-based support services that are culturally sensitive and responsive to the specific

needs of different groups within the elderly population. These services should include home care, respite care, day care centers, and social activities that promote social inclusion and combat isolation. In addition, policy recommendations should address the economic vulnerability of many older adults in Algeria by strengthening social security schemes, promoting access to employment opportunities, and providing financial assistance to those in need. The effective implementation of such policies requires a concerted effort to raise public awareness about the rights of older adults and to combat ageism and discrimination in all its forms as evidenced by the research conducted about social inclusion (Bouazza, 2020, pp. 89-105).

4.1 Principles Guiding a Comprehensive Algerian Elderly Care Policy

A foundational principle underpinning a comprehensive Algerian elderly care policy must be the unwavering commitment to dignity and autonomy. This principle emphasizes the inherent worth of each elderly individual and their right to make informed choices about their lives and care, regardless of their physical or mental capacity. This necessitates moving beyond a purely needs-based approach to social welfare, which often positions the elderly as passive recipients of aid, towards a rights-based framework that empowers them to actively participate in decisions affecting their well-being. This principle is crucial, especially in light of traditional familial support structures undergoing transformation in Algeria, requiring the state to ensure dignified care remains accessible even when familial support is limited. The Algerian Constitution, particularly Article 34, guarantees the right to health and social security for all citizens, implicitly including the elderly. However, translating this constitutional right into concrete policy actions requires a conscious effort to prioritize dignity and autonomy through person-centered care models and accessible information regarding available resources and options. This principle should guide the design and implementation of all policies, programs, and services aimed at the elderly, ensuring they are treated with respect and afforded the opportunity to live fulfilling lives on their own terms. (Benbouzid, 2018, p. 13).

Another crucial principle is ensuring equitable access to care and services, addressing the disparities that exist based on geographical location, socio-economic status, and gender. Elderly individuals residing in rural areas often face significant challenges in accessing healthcare, social services, and even basic amenities, compared to their urban counterparts. Similarly, elderly women, who often have a history of limited access to education and economic opportunities, may be particularly vulnerable and require targeted support. To achieve equitable access, a comprehensive policy must prioritize the decentralization of services, the establishment of mobile healthcare units, and the development of culturally sensitive programs tailored to the specific needs of different communities. Furthermore, addressing the socio-economic determinants of health, such as poverty and inadequate housing, is crucial in ensuring that all elderly individuals have the opportunity to live healthy and dignified lives. Algerian Family Code (1984, Article 214) stipulates the duty of relatives to provide maintenance to elderly relatives. However, this duty may not always be fulfilled, making state intervention essential to guarantee equitable access to care, regardless of family circumstances. By prioritizing equitable access, a comprehensive policy can help reduce inequalities and ensure that all elderly individuals have the opportunity to age with dignity and well-being. (Boumedienne, 2015, pp. 78-83).

Finally, a successful Algerian elderly care policy must embrace the principle of intersectoral collaboration and community participation. Addressing the complex needs of the elderly requires a coordinated effort involving various government ministries, civil society

organizations, healthcare providers, and community members. This necessitates establishing clear mechanisms for communication, coordination, and collaboration among different stakeholders, avoiding fragmented service delivery and maximizing resource utilization. Community participation is also essential, as local communities possess valuable knowledge and insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by elderly residents. Engaging community members in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs can help ensure that they are culturally relevant, effective, and sustainable. Decree No. 20-79 of 15 Rajab 1441 corresponding to March 11, 2020, establishing the national commission for the elderly, illustrates governmental intentions towards integrated strategic direction for old-age care, reinforcing the necessity for effective communication and teamwork across sectors. By fostering intersectoral collaboration and promoting community participation, a comprehensive policy can create a supportive and inclusive environment for the elderly, promoting their well-being and enabling them to remain active and engaged members of society. (Hamouda, 2020, p. 12).

4.2 Sustainable Financing Models and Multi-Sectoral Coordination

The realization of social welfare for the elderly as a human right in Algeria hinges critically on the establishment of sustainable financing models. Current reliance on state-funded social security programs, while essential, requires diversification to ensure long-term viability, particularly in the face of demographic shifts and increasing healthcare costs. Exploring innovative financing mechanisms such as public-private partnerships specifically tailored to elderly care infrastructure and services becomes paramount. Furthermore, examining the feasibility of dedicated elderly care funds financed through earmarked taxes or contributions from the private sector warrants serious consideration, as these options are discussed in several Algerian legislations, such as the Loi n° 83-11 relative aux assurances sociales (Social Insurance Law) which highlights the necessity of funding diversification. However, such models must be carefully evaluated to ensure equity, accessibility, and affordability for all elderly individuals, especially those from vulnerable and marginalized communities. This transition requires a thorough analysis of existing resource allocation mechanisms and the identification of potential inefficiencies to optimize resource utilization.

Effective multi-sectoral coordination is indispensable for delivering comprehensive and integrated elderly care services. Fragmented approaches across different government ministries (e.g., health, social affairs, housing) and civil society organizations often lead to duplication of efforts, service gaps, and inefficient resource allocation. Establishing a national coordinating body with clear mandates and authority to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy for Elderly Care is crucial. This body should facilitate information sharing, promote inter-agency collaboration, and monitor the quality and effectiveness of elderly care programs. In this line, the Décret exécutif n° 20-305 fixant les missions et l'organisation de la Direction Générale de la Solidarité Nationale (Executive Decree No. 20-305 defining the missions and organization of the General Directorate of National Solidarity) outlines the role of the government in coordinating social welfare initiatives, but further strengthening of coordination mechanisms specifically focused on elderly care is needed. This enhanced coordination should extend to local levels, ensuring that elderly individuals receive timely and appropriate support services tailored to their specific needs and preferences.

Achieving genuine sustainability in elderly care financing and multi-sectoral coordination necessitates a fundamental shift towards a rights-based approach. This involves recognizing

elderly individuals as active participants in the design, implementation, and monitoring of elderly care programs, not merely as passive recipients of assistance. Promoting citizen engagement through participatory planning processes and ensuring accountability through transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential elements. The Algerian Constitution (Constitution of Algeria, 2020) guarantees the right to social protection for all citizens, including the elderly, but operationalizing this right requires proactive measures to strengthen the legal and policy framework for elderly care. This includes enacting comprehensive legislation that enshrines the rights of elderly individuals, establishes clear standards for quality of care, and provides effective remedies for violations of these rights.

4.3 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement of Elderly Care Policies

The effectiveness of social welfare policies for the elderly, viewed through the lens of human rights, necessitates robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. These frameworks must move beyond simple output measurement to encompass a comprehensive understanding of the impact on the lived experiences of older Algerians. A key aspect of this involves the systematic collection and analysis of data related to access, quality, and affordability of elderly care services, including healthcare, social assistance, and housing. This necessitates employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, acknowledging the nuanced realities and diverse needs within the elderly population. Indicators must be aligned with international human rights standards, particularly those articulated in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and relevant provisions within the Algerian Constitution and other national laws pertaining to social protection and the rights of vulnerable groups. For instance, assessing the effectiveness of Decree No. 15-152 (2015) related to the establishment of national social protection programs requires a careful examination of its implementation at the local level, alongside the experiences of elderly individuals who are intended to benefit from it (Benmansour, 2021, pp. 112-125). Furthermore, the monitoring process should actively engage older persons and their representative organizations to ensure their voices are heard and that the policies remain responsive to their evolving needs.

The Algerian context presents unique challenges for monitoring and evaluating elderly care policies, particularly given the decentralized nature of social service delivery and the interplay between formal and informal care systems. Evaluating the true impact of initiatives, such as those outlined in the National Action Plan for Older Persons, requires careful consideration of regional disparities in resource allocation, infrastructure, and access to qualified personnel. This evaluation should also account for the role of family and community-based support systems, recognizing that in many Algerian communities, these remain the primary source of care for older adults. Developing contextually relevant indicators is crucial; for instance, indicators related to social inclusion must consider cultural norms and practices that shape the participation of older people in community life. Moreover, building capacity within local authorities and civil society organizations to conduct independent monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure the sustainability and accountability of elderly care programs. Bouazza (2018, pp. 75-89) highlights the critical need for strengthening local governance structures to effectively implement national social welfare policies for the elderly.

Continuous improvement of elderly care policies demands a feedback loop that incorporates the findings of monitoring and evaluation exercises, translating them into actionable recommendations for policy reform. This involves a commitment to evidence-based policymaking, informed by rigorous research and analysis of best practices in other countries

with similar demographic profiles and social contexts. For example, an analysis of successful elderly care models in countries like France or Canada could provide valuable insights for adapting existing Algerian policies. Crucially, continuous improvement must involve collaboration across government ministries, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and, most importantly, older persons themselves. It is also vital to align policy reforms with broader national development goals, recognizing that the well-being of the elderly population is integral to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. This process is supported by the implementation of the Algerian Social Security Law 83-11 which defines the rights of elderly people and which must be regularly improved based on monitoring the conditions of its application (Boukhari, 2000, pp. 20-35). This continuous cycle of monitoring, evaluation, and improvement is key to ensuring that social welfare policies effectively promote and protect the human rights of older Algerians, contributing to their dignity, autonomy, and full participation in society.

Conclusion

Ensuring social welfare for the elderly is not only a moral duty but a fundamental human right that reflects the values of dignity, equality, and social justice. The demographic transition in Algeria, marked by a growing elderly population and changing family structures, requires urgent and comprehensive policy responses. While existing programs provide some support, they remain fragmented and lack a unified, rights-based vision capable of addressing the complex social, economic, and health needs of older citizens.

Building an integrated national strategy is essential to guarantee effective elderly care in Algeria. Such a strategy should strengthen legal protection, secure sustainable financing, encourage multi-sectoral cooperation between health, social, and community services, and embrace innovation and technology to improve accessibility and quality of care. By aligning national policies with international human rights standards, Algeria can create a system that ensures its elderly population can age with dignity, security, and full social inclusion.

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