

Aging, family and society

الشيخوخة، الأسرة والمجتمع

Malika Rouane

University of Blida 2 Lounici Ali

Profmalikarouane@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study seeks to shed light on aging not as a biological age phenomenon and a human inevitability, but rather as a phenomenon in which the elderly loose status and social effectiveness and face a stage of “disengagement” between him and the society in which he lives, which resulted from the end of the individual’s ties to his society. Externally, whether at work (retirement) or in terms of social or family responsibility. Methodically, we raised the question: What are the general characteristics of aging? What is the social role of the elderly? Or rather, what are the repercussions of this stage on the surrounding social environment?

Keywords: aging, levels of aging, social status of the elderly, social environment, elderly care.

ملخص:

تسعى هذه الدراسة الى إلقاء الضوء على الشيخوخة ليس كظاهرة عمرية بيولوجية وحتمية إنسانية، وإنما كظاهرة يفتقد فيها المسن المكانة والفاعلية الاجتماعية لمواجهة مرحلة « فك الارتباط » (désengagement) بينه وبين المجتمع الذي يعيش فيه والتي نجمت عن انتهاء ارتباطات الفرد بمجتمعه الخارجي سواء في العمل (التقاعد) أو من حيث المسؤولية الاجتماعية او الاسرية . ومنهجيا طرحنا التساؤل الذي مؤداه ماهي الخصائص العامة للشيخوخة؟ وما هو الدور الاجتماعي للمسن؟ او بالأحرى ما انعكاسات هذه المرحلة على البيئة الاجتماعية المحيطة؟.

كلمات مفتاحية: الشيخوخة، مستويات الشيخوخة، المكانة الاجتماعية للمسن، البيئة الاجتماعية، رعاية المسنين.

Corresponding author: Malika Rouane

1. Introduction

Aging, elderly, seniors, middle-aged..., the concepts are many and the meaning is one, a phenomenon that affects all human societies, whether advanced or backward, affects women and men - with gender differences -

Therefore, we see it necessary for us to pay special attention to this group of society and to shed light on the problems they suffer from related to their old age. This is if we know that the rate of aging is constantly increasing in Arab societies in general and in Algerian society in particular.

On the other hand, we must be sure that this problem is not limited to understanding and analyzing the psychological, physical and biological processes that cause aging in humans, as aging is not a disease in itself, but rather an age stage that the individual must go through, there is no doubt about it, he only has to adapt to it and we must know how to deal with it or with those who go through it (society).

The elderly are still a major concern for politics and social policy makers in most countries of the world. Whether we like it or not, they are considered an “unproductive” group. Therefore, many countries are developing many health and social programs to serve these elderly people, and they impose an insurance system on them to provide a minimum income necessary to reach their basic needs. Perhaps the source of the problem currently lies in the fact that health and psychological developments in treatment have contributed significantly to increasing the average life expectancy of the individual and increasing his life expectancy. Therefore, it is necessary to secure and guarantee quality health care that is in line with the new conditions of the elderly in a way that preserves

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their right to establish a decent life in spending the rest of their lives.

2. Aging and its Surrounding Concepts

2.1 Aging:

The concepts and definitions of the concept of aging have varied according to the interests and multiple visions of thinkers and researchers. Aging in demography refers to the increase in the percentage of individuals with advanced ages or those advanced in the age scale within the population of a given society. This phenomenon reflects an increase in the average lifespan of individuals, and is usually manifested in the increase in the percentage of the population who have exceeded the age of sixty or sixty and five years.

In psychological analysis, we find that the feeling of old age and disability is the state that afflicts the human soul, and it is a state of weakness and functional deficiency in the human's physical, behavioral, mental or cognitive abilities associated with advancing age (J.E.Biran, 1996). It is also a natural stage of life that cannot be avoided, and it does not only mean increasing years of age, because it does not constitute only physical changes, but also psychological and social ones. Therefore, we find in sociological analysis that it views old age as: "A natural transformation or an emergency change in the body's condition determined by a group of biological factors that lead to the deterioration of the body's vital processes. It is not a problem as much as it is an increase in the state of dependence of the elderly on those around them" (Hussein, 1992, pages 97-98). It is also the text of the elderly's point of view

"A condition that makes a person refrain from work, activity, or both, and this condition is not limited to those who have passed the worst of age, but it may also affect young people, where whoever loses his social role becomes, from his own point of view, elderly" (Hussein, 1992, p. 99). Some see the importance of

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distinguishing between the concept of elderly and the concept of aging in the sense used in most medical, psychological and social studies. A careful examination of these definitions finds that most of them are concerned with the pathological aspect related to disability and the inability to manage the personal affairs of the elderly individual. Researchers - regardless of their specializations - in the field of studying the elderly sometimes use the concept of aging and other times the concept of advancing age and many other different synonyms, including: the elderly, old age, the third age...

2.2 The concept of the elderly:

Some associate them with a specific age group (usually over 65 years) and some do not take this age criterion into account. The decline in abilities and the deterioration of physical energies and health status (psychological or mental) in addition to retirement and complete cessation of production and work and the repercussions of these aspects on the psychological, behavioral and social organization of the individual in his social environment are considered the basic determinants of the elderly category (Naji, 2014, p. 272, 273).

2.3 The concept of the elderly:

This expression is used to distinguish the special person who has exceeded or surpassed the official retirement age (i.e. the group after the age of sixty), i.e. those who have lived longer than others, provided that we do not confuse the concept of old age (advancing in age) with the concept of aging, as the first means increasing in age, while the second means the symptoms or biological and physiological changes accompanying aging, knowing that not most elderly people are in a state of aging (Naji, 2014, p. 273).

It is also worth noting that there are some mental illnesses that are associated with aging, such as: Alzheimer's, senile dementia,

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total or partial memory loss... and others.

Studies also indicate that the elderly are among the population groups that consume the most care services of various types, as the problems of these elderly people are exacerbated by disability and their inability to manage their own affairs.

Based on this, the general characteristics of aging can be limited to the following points (Shaalán, 2012, p. 110):

A state of weakness: not necessarily a disease or illness.

- It is not determined by a specific age, although it is generally related to age (the common age is 65 years).
- It affects the individual's social performance.
- It is linked to negative responses with others.
- These responses are affected by the value and cultural system of society.
- It requires a special social environment for social interaction.
- Image of the elderly in society

3.1 From social integration to social withdrawal:

Dealing with aging varies from one society to another, from one culture to another, from one historical period to another, from one class to another, and even varies according to race and gender. Therefore, dealing with the issues of aging and its problems affects and is affected by professional practices and the general policy followed for this purpose. But the question that imposes itself here is: How does society view this group? Or rather, what is society's position on the elderly?

Looking at the status of the elderly throughout history and in different societies presents us with a reality that reflects images that dominate people's minds regarding the elderly, and which still have echoes in the thinking of the people of the Third World. They are represented in looking at the elderly as a man who enjoys wisdom and experiences, and therefore must be respected. As for elderly women, the idea is rooted in history. If we look at our societies, we cannot deny the existence of positive aspects in favor of the elderly (men or women), as they are inspired by the

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teachings and values of Islam, which urges us to appreciate them and give them their due respect, appreciation, advice and leadership. This status is established through the nature of the relationship between children and parents, especially that which is directed from children towards their parents, which stems from the prevailing Islamic values, as God Almighty says: “And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him. And to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor repel them but address them with honorable words.” (The Holy Quran, Surat Al-Isra, verse 23). This positive image is found in most developing countries, which appreciate the elderly and consider old age a stage of dignity and balance in mind and behavior, such that the elderly become an important reference in consultation and managing family affairs. This is also the case in the continent of Asia, for example, and despite the differences in countries there, the view of the elderly is full of reverence and respect, as they are considered a source of wisdom and a wellspring of knowledge and they are the basic component of social life. This is in contrast to Western countries, which view old age as synonymous with disability, dementia or handicap as a burden on their families first and then on their society. This is what takes us to present what is known as successful aging, which Fisher defined in light of the strategies of compatibility as “refers to the individual’s reaching the maximum effort he can and reaching the level of social, physical and psychological well-being in later life, which brings joy to the self and to others...” (Malham, 2009, p. 377), considering that successful aging according to this consideration has two main criteria, which are:

- The first criterion: It is represented by satisfaction with life as the elderly person knows it themselves, meaning the elderly person’s view of himself.
- The second criterion: relates to the elderly person's

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performance of his social roles, and this is determined by the society's position on the elderly, i.e. the view of children and youth towards the phenomenon of "aging" in general and the elderly in particular.

That is why we find in this type of aging, which is an ally of Western societies in particular, that it is not a sudden age stage for the elderly, but rather it constitutes "something inside him: it is the fear and danger that comes from people's view of him, as he always wants to live his life as it was without any difference, but that difference occurs from others towards his behavior or actions and they force him to conform to a certain behavior or form..." (Naji, 2014, p. 286)

In any case, the view of aging differs from one culture to another and from one society to another, as it differs in terms of type and class, and even from one geographical area to another within the same society. Hence, we consider that old age is a historical and cultural construct as much as it is a natural phenomenon. It is based on biological, demographic, economic and political factors (dimensions related to the provision of health care, ensuring a pension or salary, i.e. in short, enjoying the areas of social service), but it is also based on an image of the elderly, which in some cases is positive and in other cases negative, and which each society forms in accordance with its values and concept of humanity and the human being.

Based on what has been mentioned, we wonder about the position of the elderly in light of the discussions and transformations within the framework of sustainable development? We can say that in light of human development, a special vision of the elderly has been formed in most countries of the world, where some cultures have emphasized the positive aspect of the elderly as a process that continues throughout life, in which the elderly individual acquires good qualities and experiences, as they bear an educational responsibility of vital importance (an example of this is traditional societies in Africa)

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as they are capable of knowledge and they have an invaluable store... Thus, the image of the elderly is very positive and can continue to benefit from it as the elderly continue to live or survive, meaning that it is useful to society.

Talking about the dimensions of human development leads us, whether we like it or not, to talk about “the position of aging in light of technological developments”, the latter of which has affected most - if not most - aspects of life in the present times. We usually measure the degree of development of any country in comparison to developed countries, with regard to aging in advanced Western societies, it is a striking phenomenon, how could it not be, when they (Western societies) build factories, establish laboratories, and spend billions of money and dollars for nothing but to fight aging, as everyone is rushing and looking forward to eternal youth or what could be called outgoing youth, and the Internet and the means of social communication it has opened have helped them in achieving this "hysterical" endeavor, especially among women, although men are now following in the same footsteps, and in our opinion it is more of a commercial endeavor than a cultural, social, or anything else. The general meaning: an explicit rejection of aging and a strong resistance to its effects, and accordingly we conclude that this period is dominated by negative images of aging, to the point that the term "elderly" is now used to refer to a person whose value we want to demean as evidence of deterioration, the end, or its approach... and other images that reflect the perceptions that the West holds towards the elderly. It is a clear change in values in the principles that Western societies call for and that other societies (developing countries and others) seek to adopt. A position that deserves every researcher, regardless of his background, to make this issue an intellectual and analytical station and try to answer a fundamental question: Is this the tax of globalization? Or is it just dependency...? Or in short, are they effects of the post-

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globalization era?

3.2 Elderly Care: The Surrounding Social Environment:

The issue of the continued growth of elderly individuals represents an issue that has an economic and social impact on the countries of the South and the North, as indicated by the World Bank reports for the year 1994, which confirmed that the increasing growth in developing countries reached half a billion in 1990 in the world and constituted 9 percent of the total world population, and is expected to double in 2030 to 1.4 billion elderly, most of which will be in developing countries, more than half of it in Asia and more than a quarter in China alone. Statistics also tell us that the elderly have now become the visible segment among the population of the global community, and we do not say this randomly, but through an extrapolation of the global reality of the elderly ([http://www. Alukah.met](http://www.Alukah.net)), and this is due to the demographic changes in the global population pyramid and the increase in life expectancy and birth rates achieved and resulting from the living changes that have occurred in human life in the current era. We mean by this the positive developments in various areas of life: in health, housing, education, sanitation, clean water..., and thus eliminating the negative aspects of epidemics. Many diseases used to threaten the human race and limit its lifespan (exposure to diseases or death). But with the increase in the number of elderly people in developing countries, along with the decline in the level of development in both its types (economic and social), and the increase in the poverty rate, which in turn leads to a series of problems for different groups in society, such as unemployment among young people and degree holders, insufficient wages, lack of services, etc., it will lead to a deterioration in the conditions of the “elderly” group, and accordingly, economic and social factors will have clear effects on the situation of the elderly. The crucial question here is: What are the mechanisms or mechanisms adopted in framing aging? If we look at our Arab

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Islamic societies, and despite the emergence of the elderly problem in recent years, we do not deny that significant efforts have been made to overcome the problems and difficulties facing this segment of society, which appear in issuing legislation specific to the care of the elderly, including programs, policies and plans at the local and national levels to provide health, economic and social care for them, considering it a duty dictated by moral values (Al-Jawhari, 1998, pp. 175-179), and a matter that imposes recognition of the services they have provided to society in their youth and during their years of giving, as well as considering it a religious duty, since Islam has given care and attention to the elderly by urging respect, appreciation and care for the elderly. Thus, we find that the moral rules in these Arab Muslim countries (and Algeria as a model) will remain strong enough for families to maintain their ties with the elderly while increasing their dependence on them, thus serving as an effective mechanism for framing aging in these countries. Thus, we can present the features of social care that the elderly enjoy in these countries in the following points:

- The placement in social care institutions "nursing homes" or "old people's homes" is a phenomenon that exists in Arab and Islamic societies despite the crisis it poses for the elderly.
- Given the increase in the number of elderly people with the high costs of their care (social economic care), we must at the same time record the shortcomings of the state's capabilities with the scarcity or absence of financial capabilities for the vast majority of the elderly.
- The difficulty of implementing a social policy based on competencies and effectiveness, as some family trends are still negative towards employing a male or female nurse or a babysitter for the elderly man or woman.
- If we consider "kinship" and "relatives" in the Islamic sense as the basic mechanism for caring for the elderly, then we must

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focus on the family as the basic structure on which the social policy calling for caring for the elderly is based, knowing that this will require strong general measures from the government and society.

- We conclude that: "kinship ties are the alternative par excellence to the nursing home."

- . The position of the elderly in Algerian culture: It is viewed through

3.3 Upbringing in the family through upbringing in Islam:

Islam has been concerned with the family, social upbringing, and raising children, considering that Islamic education is the science of preparing the Muslim person for the life of this world and the hereafter, preparing him completely from the health, mental, practical, moral, social, and creative perspectives in order to serve the individual on the one hand and raise the status of society on the other hand. It is therefore an educational factory that can shape and create the individual in light of high ideals and sublime values based on sanctifying religion and respecting family relationships, especially the relationship between children and parents, as it calls for developing the spirit of initiative and individual responsibility and provides him with means of advice. We can provide an overview of the family upbringing pattern inspired by Islamic education by addressing the functions it performs in the life of the individual and society, and among these functions are: (Jadu, 2006, p. 245)

- Correcting the young and imprinting them with good qualities to make them happy in their present and future.

- Refining behavior, by being keen on obeying God on the one hand, and establishing their relationship with the members of society on the basis of agreed upon love and cooperation on the other hand.

- Providing the individual with a wide range of information and knowledge (cultural and religious) related to the principles of religion and its rulings, with which he regulates his behavior

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when dealing with others, regardless of their status (their age: young or old, their gender: women or men, their financial status: poor or rich, or other...), and this is to reach a good life for all based on cooperation and cohesion for the purpose of protecting the Islamic society from the tyranny of materialistic and atheistic trends.

The importance of Islamic education and its role in the process of social upbringing is one of the matters that is difficult to address in a specific aspect or direction (here functional) because that means exposure to all aspects of life (Al-Rahman, 1998, p. 123).

3.3.1 The elderly in the Algerian family:

The elderly in the Algerian family take titles such as: "Sheikh", "Al-Shaibani", or "Al-Ajouz" or "Al-Shaibania" for the elderly woman. The important thing is that he has a status that fluctuates between respect and dignity at times and indifference at other times. This is according to the families and cultures that they carry about the status of the elderly. Since Algeria is part of the Arab-Islamic map, what applies to these countries necessarily applies to Algeria, but with certain and specific characteristics in the following elements:

- Family style.
- Housing style.
- The material and economic level of the family.
- The cultural level of the parents.
- The level of religiosity and the amount of social values.

Among the things that indicate the status that the “elderly” occupy in the bosom of the Algerian family, which reflects the social culture around the issue of care and attention that this segment of society enjoys, is that today’s child is tomorrow’s father and grandfather of the future. Therefore, it is necessary to provide all “satisfaction” - in the words of educational psychologists in particular - of all kinds (social, moral,

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educational...) to this individual from his early upbringing, that is, from the beginning of his childhood, so that he grows up on a culture with Islamic origins with eternal educational principles, principles and methodology, preserving the cohesion of the family and strengthening the ties between its members, no matter how different the times and people are, because the origin is one, permanent, common, and authentic for everyone, which is religion. Here we draw inspiration from the status pattern that the elderly enjoy in the midst of Algerian culture, which for many is based on respect, dignity, gratitude, sacrifice, and other characteristics of sincerity in upbringing, patience, kindness, and responsibility..., but there is another side to this "coin of dealing" and it is represented by that group that, despite being raised on these principles that glorify the status of the elderly, has deviated from it and has come to see nursing homes, or what is commonly known as the nursing home, as a refuge for these elderly people who have spent their lives raising and serving their children, whose validity has expired and who are no longer wanted. Are these signs of a cultural and social change? Or is it merely a value-based trend towards a new institutional formation that glorifies individualism and celebrates independence?!

A question that addresses the conscience before the mind, it requires thinking and not an answer... The important thing is that the status of the elderly in Algeria fluctuates between the two sides of the scale, and reaching balance is not an easy matter. However, it is a goal that deserves all the effort expended on it because it achieves for its owner the maximum happiness and peace he can in every field of material and moral production (Mohamed, 2001, pages 87, 89).

4. Conclusion

Everything changes all the time, and life is a successive series of continuous changes. With age, behavior changes, and takes directions and developments that the developing individual is exposed to, whether as a fetus, infant, child, adolescent, adult,

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or elderly, in varying and different forms according to the surrounding cultural, educational, and economic environment. We note that dividing growth into stages facilitates scientific study and draws attention to the distinctive aspects of growth for each stage, on the one hand, with the importance of pointing out the adaptation of legal mechanisms to protect old age. Although this aspect has been deliberately omitted from the study and the focus is on its socio-cultural aspect.

Recommendations:

Based on this, the general points related to the phenomenon of old age can be summarized as follows:

1. Aging is not a problem in itself, so we recommend dealing with it as a stage affected by professional practices and public policy, and not just an idea of unity.
2. Ensure the support and strengthening of family ties as a basic basis for embodying social care for the elderly within families.
3. Develop and reform the family support system by employing competencies, for example: a professional team consisting of specialists, social workers, and social service workers.
4. Search for alternative models and formulas to frame aging.
5. Focus on the community rehabilitation of the elderly to integrate them into community affairs, to live within work relationships of a different type than typical work relationships.
6. Encourage initiatives, activities, or practices provided by the elderly, such as community work, charity, and others, in all socio-professional systems.
7. Empower the elderly while paying attention to local resources and strengthening the concepts of self-reliance, self-development, skill development, and continued production.

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