

Population in the Eyes of the Media

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Abstract

The emerging patterns of population, particularly in the latter half of the last century, and their complex, multifaceted consequences have raised significant concerns among planners and academicians. This is evident from the substantial volume of recent literature addressing this issue. Population growth-related topics have gained paramount importance within the broader development framework, especially in light of deteriorating resource situations, environmental degradation, and the accompanying decline in quality of life, all attributed to population growth. Current trends indicate a declining growth rate, an ageing population, late marriages, a higher dependency ratio, an increase in "ghost houses," and reduced demand for housing and schools, all of which suggest shifts in population dynamics shortly. While several countries have experienced a decrease in their population, others with medium-sized populations and higher growth rates are poised to play a more significant role in the global economy. Furthermore, population parameters are changing rapidly, making it challenging to capture these shifts through decadal censuses and occasional surveys. In this context, the media have become increasingly sensitive to population issues, highlighting the necessity of integrating conventional data sources with electronic data for comprehensive analysis. The media's approach to these topics often reflects diverse considerations that may not align with traditional analyses and research methods used in the past. As a result, the media can no longer be overlooked as a valuable source of information in the realm of population analysis.

Introduction

Media serves as a significant conduit in our daily lives, influencing every aspect of our existence—from the policies that shape our socio-economic and politico-cultural perspectives to the practices of various organisations and institutions within society. It has become a key instructor and influencer, particularly with the rise of digital media. Digital platforms play a vital role in the dissemination of

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information through visual data, the coordination of medical resources via mobile health applications, and the promotion of public health campaigns on social media. Additionally, digital tools are essential for effective population management and disease tracking (Bao, Cao, Xiong, and Tang, 2020). With continuous updates and alerts, online news keeps us informed at the global, national, and local levels, providing not just information but also entertainment. Consequently, media capture more of consumers' time and attention than ever before. Industry estimates indicate that adults spend an average of 11 hours each day engaging with mass media, amounting to more than half of their working hours.

Objective

The objective of this research paper is to investigate the potential of integrating media-based sources with traditional data sources for population analysis. Traditional sources, such as censuses and surveys, provide information at infrequent intervals, typically every five to ten years. However, population dynamics are continuously evolving and cannot be fully understood through such limited timeframes. Therefore, incorporating both media and traditional sources has become essential. This paper aims to highlight the role of media in bringing attention to critical population issues that are poised to shape the world in the coming years.

Research Methodology

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive global survey of electronic media was conducted. The findings indicate that the media have recently begun to prioritize population issues significantly. However, there are considerable variations in the spatial coverage, frequency of reporting, depth of analysis, and methods of information collection. Despite these inconsistencies, the widespread presence of media engages with nearly every aspect of life, making it a considerable player in public discourse and a substantial revenue generator.

The mass media industry comprises eight primary sectors that generate income while fulfilling the public's demand for entertainment and information. These sectors include books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, radio, movies, television, and the Internet. Historically, print media (comprising books, newspapers, and magazines) accounted for more than half of the total revenue generated by the industry before 1987. However, the advent of the internet has transformed the media landscape, emerging as a dominant force that has significantly replaced print media revenue streams. In fact, as of now, print media

contributes only 31 per cent of the total income generated by the overall media industry.

This research underscores the necessity of integrating various sources of information to provide a more comprehensive understanding of population dynamics and to emphasize the media's critical role in addressing and informing the public about demographic issues.

“Consumers need to have an internal compass where they're able to balance the capabilities that technology offers them for work, for search with the qualities of the lives they live offline”.

Richard Hernandez, Google

Analyzing Population Issues Through the Lens of Digital Media

While digital media is often criticized for challenges such as misinformation, lack of guidance, and information leakage, this paper seeks to analyze the increasing use of digital media in connection with real-world scenarios involving social chaos, social solidarity, demographic and economic crises, and population policy. In this context, the paper aims to explore population issues as portrayed by the media.

Why Population Issues Matter?

As of November 2022, the world population surpassed the 8 billion mark, with the 2020 World Population Data Sheet projecting an increase from 7.8 billion in 2020 to 9.9 billion by 2050—a growth of over 25 per cent. However, this growth is not uniform across the globe. A review of global population dynamics since the first decade of the 21st century and projections for 2050 reveal significant deviations from traditional notions of population growth.

In many regions, while populations have increased, growth rates have declined. Total fertility rates have fallen below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, which signifies that substantial countries like China, India, and the United States may begin to experience population declines. Factors such as reduced fertility rates, an ageing population, increased life expectancy, lower immigration rates, changing marriage patterns, and improved status for women are set to alter the mindset and quality of life for future generations by 2050. Signs of depopulation have already emerged.

Demographic Shifts and Economic Implications

The ageing population has led to a decrease in the percentage of children, while

the dependency ratio continues to rise, negatively impacting the economy. Childcare centres are increasingly being repurposed as old-age homes, and demand for housing is either stagnating or declining. In response, governments are amending population policies to encourage higher birth rates, often through incentives. Although women are enjoying greater privileges and independence, they frequently face the dilemma of choosing between career advancement and motherhood. As a result, by 2050, women may bear greater responsibility for sustaining the global economy.

Moreover, depopulation has prompted significant redistribution. A minimum population level is necessary to maintain, sustain, and grow institutions, infrastructure, and services. In developed countries, while infrastructure exists, diminishing populations hinder their sustainability. Consequently, immigration policies have been relaxed, and incentives are offered to attract qualified and skilled individuals from developing nations. However, similar challenges are afflicting developing countries as well, where regional disparities in total fertility rates and women-child ratios are increasingly apparent, leading to further redistribution within these nations.

Complexity of Population Predictions

According to John I. Clarke, predicting population changes is inherently complex, as human systems do not adhere to predictable laws and transform rapidly. While it is essential for countries to engage in futurology to strategise for planned growth, one must approach such predictions with caution, acknowledging the uncertainty of the future. Nations must devise strategies to address the alarming issues stemming from declining populations. This is the first instance where the world must contemplate survival amid depopulation, which will necessitate redistribution and may trigger significant international and domestic migrations. Now is indeed the time to assess and respond to this unprecedented situation.

Role of Media

The media have been particularly sensitive to developments in countries like China and Canada, and to some extent, India. It has introduced new terms and acronyms in response to these demographic shifts. Media priorities may fluctuate based on the significance of issues, time, and context. For example, the focus on China stems from its recent population policies and their implications, which are

redefining the nation's economic future amid ageing and slow growth. The media questions whether China's younger generation can reverse the trend of population decline, highlighting the need for bold actions.

In summary, as the world grapples with demographic changes, a nuanced understanding augmented by media analysis will be crucial for navigating the complexities of population issues and their societal impacts.

Population Trends According to the Media

It is the dawn of 2023. Ahead of us are several national problems that continue to be overlooked. The solutions are obvious, but the intent to act is missing. Critical areas face stagnation, with population and education on top of the list. Both sectors are interrelated but their current state is at the heart of everything that plagues Pakistan's progress. The last 10 years show little change in our educational trends. Universal primary enrolment, especially for girls, is lagging. And fertility rates have not changed for a decade.”

Zeba Sathar,2023

The above-mentioned comment was published in DAWN on 16th Jan, 2023. It is a Pakistani English-language newspaper that was launched in British India in 1941, became a daily newspaper in October. In this newspaper, Zeba Sathar further added that “Population control is a term full of fallacies; it is decidedly not the way the state should tackle demographic challenges”. Related to this, Mahmood Mamdani, in his book on The Myth of Population Control, mentioned how population used to control state politics-policy-society, that too before 50 years from today. The book was on the impact of an emergency on a village in Punjab.

It was 24th November 2021 when India's government declared that the country's fertility rate had dropped below the replacement rate (2 children per woman), which indicates an insufficiency of new births to cope with a steady population structure for the future, like many of the richer nations (Brazil, Russia, China) are going to face. It is no surprise that demographers are now explaining this falling fertility scenario as a 'demographic contagion'. According to the Managing Editor of the Times of India, more babies were born in India in 2003 than in any year before and after:

“All these indicators point in the same direction – Indian family size is shrinking faster than most people think. It took only 14 years for the

fertility rate to fall by 50% (from 3 to 2) in India, whereas in Bangladesh – globally acclaimed for birth control – a similar fall took 17 years.”

The Times of India, or TOI, is the oldest and 4th largest (by circulation) English-language daily newspaper owned by The Times Group. TOI issued its first edition on 3rd November 1838 as The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce. In the era of today's communication networks, like the broadcast industry (one-way communication by antenna, satellite, two-way communication by underground cable), we cannot ignore the role of the newspaper, which acts more smartly. Unfortunately, these newspapers are struggling to make a profit. Advertising revenues in the last five years have plummeted, partly because of difficult economic conditions in the United States, but also because newspaper readers have migrated to other sources for their requirements. Adults within the age-group of 18 to 35 are less likely to read a daily newspaper—even online, than mature adults in the age-group of 45 and above (Fig.1). The media highlighted that the world's population reached 8 billion on November 15, 2022. Their focus was primarily on economic implications, the evolving developmental landscape, emerging opportunities, and potential investments. This coverage was notably contemporary, as the media did not rely exclusively on decadal censuses or occasional surveys. Instead, it emphasised trends such as the slowing population growth rate, which could lead to depopulation, as well as the redistribution of populations. This redistribution included both skilled and unskilled migration across borders and continents. The media also sought to identify potential beneficiaries of these demographic changes. Various forms of electronic media, including YouTube, newspapers, and websites, addressed these issues, although the scale of their reporting varied widely, ranging from local community perspectives to continental analyses (Fig 1). The media has taken up issues that are more pressing and have an immediate impact on society and the economy. However, the spatial extent varies. It has been more concerned with population increase in some places and decline all over, fertility rate, birth rate, overpopulation, projections for the year 2050 and 2100, impact on house owners, property tax, movement of skilled persons, immigration, ease of getting visas, spouses work permit, economic chaos, overpopulation and over consumption, climate change, shrinking small towns, ageing societies, myth of population control, policies, closure of childcare centres and the most frequently discussed about the issues related to the China's population.

Singapore's population increases 3.4% after two years of decline

The number of citizen marriages rose 20.6 per cent, while the resident fertility rate recovered slightly from a historic low.



People in the central business district of Singapore on Mar 25, 2022. (Photo: CNA/Gaya Chandramohan)

SINGAPORE: Singapore's total population grew by 3.4 per cent to 5.64 million as of June this year, after two straight years of decline, according to an annual report by the National Population and Talent Division on Tuesday (Sep 27).

Fertility rate declined by 20% in India in 10 years: SRS data



The global population at 8 billion people

In 1974, the world had 4 billion people. The United Nations estimates the global population has doubled since then, passing 8 billion on Nov. 15, 2022, a period of just 48 years.

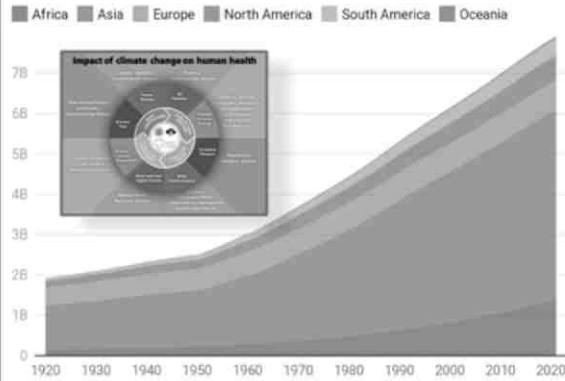


Chart: The Conversation/CC-BY-ND - Source: OWID/UN - Get the data - Download image - Created with Datawrapper

China's population has increased by 53.38 mln in past decade: NBS



EUROPE - RUSSIA: Russia's population is in a historic decline as emigration, war and a plunging birth rate form a 'perfect storm'

Should military operations continue in the coming months, as expected, Russia may see less than 1.2 million births next year, the lowest in modern history.

BY BLOOMBERG
October 18, 2022 5:50 AM EDT



THE BUSINESS TIMES



THE LEVEL GROUND
An ageing population is not a problem for the private homes market

INDIA: India to become most populous country by 2023, experts call it an opportunity for nation

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN
CLIMATE CHANGE | OPINION
Population Decline Will Change the World for the Better
A future with fewer people offers increased opportunity and a healthier environment
By Stephanie Fichtel on May 4, 2023

8 billion people: why trying to control the population is often futile - and harmful

Elon Musk has said that "population collapse due to low fertility rates is a much bigger risk to civilization than global warming".

Business Standard is another English-language daily newspaper that offers opinions and insights on a range of subjects, including the Indian economy, infrastructure, international business, trade, stock and currency markets, corporate governance, and policy-oriented demographic issues. As mentioned above, *Business Standard*, with its own views, has identified one of the root causes of declining fertility and the resulting ageing of a country.

Similarly, as in China, India has been an example of population control policies. There are plenty of cases, like Iran, that have made contraceptives available to their public health services to reduce their population growth rate successfully. Bangladesh has been investing in community outreach services and the empowerment of women. Saudi Arabia permitted women to access contraception in the private sector without foisting any state policy. Families across the globe enable themselves to pursue their wishes and fundamental rights. The country director of the Indian Population Council has rightly mentioned that the recent *new population narrative asks that the state should not be the controller but the enabler* (<https://www.dawn.com>). Although it has been a hotly debated issue, it is also a media version that in today's world, from the context of society-ecology-health, one of the most effective ways that we can help our planet is by choosing to have a smaller family.

“Having one child means that there is time for us as a couple as well as our children. We are able to give our child more in terms of time than we would be able to if we had more children and the bond between the three of us often draws comment. We are able to afford to buy more sustainable foods and fuels.”

Population Matters. 2024

Fertility Trends

Based on 2019 data from the *World Data Sheet, 2020* of the Population Reference Bureau, the total fertility rate varied from 0.92 in South Korea to 6.86 in Niger. However, as per the fertility rate by the World Bank in 2020, it varies from 1.22 in Taiwan in Asia to 7.15 in Niger in Africa. Regarding China, its population continued to grow till 2022 before approaching zero growth and eventually entering a stage of normalised decline. *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong-based English-language newspaper, mentioned that “in the next 10 to 20 years, China's natural population growth will not continue falling, it will fluctuate around zero and could see small drops, but there will not be rapid decreases” (Sun, 2022). Chen Weifurther observes that the natural population increase was 2.04 million people in 2020 and 0.48 million in 2021. Moreover, apart from China, the attention of the media is equally on India:

Since 1950 India and China have provided 35% of the world's population growth.

But China's strict family-planning rules—the so-called one-child policy introduced in 1980—drastically reduced its birth rate. Now its population is about to decline. Although the Communist Party allows women to have three children, they average only 1.2. By 2050 China's population will be 8% smaller than it is now. India's population, meanwhile, will continue growing. It is expected to peak at 1.7bn in 2064, when it will be nearly 50% larger than that of China (see chart). India is expected to provide more than a sixth of the increase of the world's working-age population (15-64-year-olds) between now and 2050.

The Economist, 2023

The Economist, a British weekly newspaper, has been insightful regarding current affairs, international business, politics, technology, and culture. According to this newspaper, demographers have also supported the nation's three-child policy that was rolled out in 2021 due to its likely impact on population growth. Besides, there are warnings that China's ageing population crisis will continue to deepen, as the number of people aged 60 and older accounted for 18.9 per cent of the population in 2021, up from 18.7 in 2020. The number of people aged 65 and older accounted for 14.2 per cent of the population, up 13.5 per cent last year and the first time it has ever topped 14 per cent, which some experts view as a key threshold in defining the level of population ageing.

In Europe, *Hungary Today*, a major daily newspaper, highlights that in the year 2021, about 93 thousand children were born and 153 thousand have died in this country. The former is a relatively good one, but the latter is a bad one. The balance of the two statistics is a shortage of around 60 thousand, which will be offset by an immigration surplus. During peacetime, since the introduction of official statistics, this country has never had a natural population balance as bad as that of 2021 (*Hungary Today*, 2022). However, the country is very hopeful for 2022 onwards to show a more positive picture in this context.

Am Expat, a news site in Germany, published that the proportion of young people is sinking to a historic low as a result of the rapidly ageing population in Germany. Although the country has long been coping with ageing, recently the statistics from the Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) exposed the fact of an all-time low proportion of young people (since 1950). The youth population in Germany had reached a peak back in the 1980s when they made up 16.7 per cent of the population. Of the 83.2 million people living in Germany at the end of 2020, nearly 8.4 million were aged between 15 and 24 years (in 1983, the figure was 13.1 million). This means that the so-called *Generation Z* makes up 10.1 per cent of the total population. Except for the year 2015, the number and proportion of 15- to 24-year-olds in the German population have been falling steadily since 2005 (Carter, 2021).

If the prediction based on the projections from NRS is realised, Scotland's

population will fall by 1.5 per cent over the next 25 years, while the UK population will grow by 5.8 per cent. The Scottish workforce is already over 50, and this figure would grow. In this context, urgent action was needed to make this country fit for the future. Its chief executive stated:

"Even before the pandemic, our health and social care services faced immense pressure and now they're being stretched to breaking point. If we are to deliver on the healthcare needs of older people both now and in the future, more investment and resources will be needed to ensure older people can access what they need, when they need it." (Age Scotland, 2022)

Croatia is an area that has experienced 10 per cent fewer people living within its territory than a decade ago, according to preliminary results of a census released on 14th January 2022. According to the national statistics offices, this European Union country had 3.8 million in 2021, compared with 4.2 million in 2011. It was also mentioned that, in the last ten years, the number decreased by 396 thousand people. For this country, this shortage of population amounts to *depopulation* – a matter of concern to almost all the countries of Europe, with some exceptions. However, elsewhere in the Balkan region, there has been a combination of low birth rates and emigration toward more prosperous countries in the European Union. The Croatian government has singled out the problem as a major challenge for the authorities and even the country's future.

The Korea Times, the oldest of three English-language newspapers published daily in South Korea, is also very much sensitive about demographic situations amid the country's chronically low birth rate, rapid ageing and a decline in incoming foreigners during the pandemic. Currently, South Korean women are estimated to have an average of less than 0.80 children throughout their entire reproductive period, down from 0.84 just a year earlier.

The number of newborns declined to 260 thousand in 2021, which is equal to as low as 0.5 per cent of the total population. The country's total population was estimated to have peaked at 51.84 million in 2020 before falling to an estimated 51.75 million (2021) and a projected 37.7 million in 2070, according to the latest medium variant projection by Statistics Korea (2018). This will put the country in a major drop in the working-age population, a phenomenon known as a *demographic cliff*. Further, if this trend continues, the working-age population will reach 17.37 million in 2070, making up 46.1 per cent of the total population. Policymakers warned the country may face an "*age quake*" starting in 2030-40, an earthquake-like demographic shock from a fall in population and rapid ageing, if it does not promptly tackle the issue. By 2100, its population is projected to be 24 million (a fall of 53%) from the year 2019.

“Many young people are delaying or giving up on getting married or having babies due to economic difficulties and changes in social norms. The number of those getting married sharply fell due to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Korea Times, 2021

TheGuardian.com is a British news and media website owned by the Guardian Media Group. As of November 2014, it was the second most popular online newspaper in the UK, with over 17 million readers per month; with over 21 million monthly readers, covering subjects including sport, business, environment, technology, arts and media, and lifestyle. On 19th November 2022, a published article about 'I'm afraid to have children: fear of an older future in Japan and South Korea' depicts the real demographic crisis in Japan. In 2014, Japan's population was estimated at 127 million which is expected to shrink to 107 million, with a wholesome of 16 per cent of the population by 2040. Furthermore, the population will be squeezed by 24 per cent by 2050 (97 million). If the demographic trend continues, this island country is going to face a total population decline of 50% or more by the year 2100. Further, on 4th January 2023, the *Times of India* posted another issue like “Japan offering money to make families exit Tokyo.” On 29th January 2023, the article “Japan PM: Now or never to fix birth rate” was published by *The Telegraph*, rightly revealing the fear of the country's administration about the future crisis..

BBC recently highlighted attempts to slow Bulgaria's population decline - the fastest in the world - by improving educational and economic opportunities in the country, making it more attractive for younger workers to stay rather than emigrate elsewhere in the European Union or to other countries. The United Nations regularly publishes demographic projections estimating how the world's population could change over the next several decades, and it is found that 20 countries are projected to have the largest percentage decline in population between 2020 and 2050. Further, following the U.S. Census Bureau's *Population Projections 2017*, the decade 2030s will be marked as a 'Transformative Decade' and is going to emerge as a decade of important demographic momentum. By 2030, the population will be older and fall into the 60+ age group, which in turn will expand the volume of the aged population so that 1 in every 5 Americans will be in the retirement age. It indicates 20 per cent of the total population exceeds the defined margin of 7 per cent marked by the United Nations. Strikingly, by 2035, there will be 76.7 million under-18 people with 78 million above-65 population. Though overseas territories of other countries, the French territory of Wallis and Futuna, is projected by the UN to have an 18.7 per cent population loss over the next three decades.

World population to decrease from 2064- a report was published by *Deutsche Welle* on 3rd February 2022 in *Frontline*. There was an argument that we need a plan B if the Earth finds itself irreversibly damaged through climate change, overpopulation, a third world war or an eventual mass extinction. According to a 2020 report published in *The Lancet* by researchers from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), the global population could decrease after the second half of the century. Elon Musk tweeted a new concept of “*population collapse*”. That means there might not be enough population for *Musk's Mars colonization plan*. They argued, "If there are not enough people for Earth, then there definitely won't be enough for Mars". Predictions by the IHME suggest that by 2064, the global population will reach its peak at 9.73 billion, followed by a decrease of almost a billion by the end of the century. These findings show a very different perspective from previous projections by the United Nations, which estimate a steady increase to around 11 billion by 2100 (Welle,2022).

According to IHME researchers, the declining population will not necessarily be a bad concept for the future. It may offer relief to the environment because fewer people use fewer resources and generate fewer carbon emissions. But it cannot be a remedy against climate change. Some countries like Japan, Spain and Ukraine could face a halving or more of their population by 2100. China is predicted to fall from its current 1.4 billion people to roughly 700 million, despite the 2015 end of the one-child policy. But the situation is not the same for all countries. Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East are the only regions expected to have a higher population in 2100 than in 2017. On average, higher-income Western European countries would reach a population peak before 2040, much earlier than the predicted 2064 global peak. In the case of Germany, the population would peak at 85 million by 2035, but decrease less severely to about 60 million by 2100 (Welle, 2022).

Emerging Population Issues

Yahoo News is very much aware of the historical drop in the number of newborn babies relative to the population of women between 15 to 44. The long decline of the US birthrate is well documented and published in an article, “America is looking down to barrel of population collapse” on 29th November 2021. A recent [Pew poll](#) found the fraction of non-parents between 18 and 49 saying they were "very likely" to have kids fell from 32 per cent in 2018 to 26 per cent this year, while the fraction saying they were "not too likely" or "not at all likely" increased from 37 to 44 per cent. The US has been experiencing a weirdly high rate of birth, compared to other nations, significantly because of teen pregnancy and more immigration. But these major sources of birth mentioned above have been steadily declining for decades.

Roughly, there has been a marked association between continued enforcement of rigid gender norms and lower fertility. Several countries like South Korea and Japan have very severe social sanctions against single mothers and some of the lowest birthrates in the world, at an estimated 1.4 and 0.9 children per woman, respectively. Germany used to have a very patriarchal welfare state and paid for it in the form of a low birthrate, too, though it seems to have made some progress in this area recently. By contrast, Sweden and France have kept their fertility rate comparatively high (1.7 & 1.8) by embracing gender equality and, especially for single parents, as it is harder to raise a child solely (Cooper, 2021).

The immediate task for the world is to save more and more children at birth and ensure that they grow into healthy and educated adults. Considering India aims to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2025, even if this happens, the estimated per-capita GDP rank would still be around 135 out of 190 economies. The harsh reality is that, among the Asian economies, India's per-capita GDP is lower than some of the neighbouring countries. It has to get transformed from an *emerging* to a *developed* economy, or it may find itself in a *middle-income* trap. Therefore, a nation first needs to raise incomes, which requires job creation. Especially for the countries, where on the one hand, “growth is jobless”, and on the other hand, there is a lack of structural change, with the share of the workforce in agriculture increasing. This does not bode well for the country's demographic dividend. With the sympathetically unbalanced wealth distribution, the top 1 per cent of people in India hold 33 per cent of the wealth, and the top 10 per cent hold 64.6 per cent of the country's wealth as per the *World Inequality Report, 2022*. Income needs to be inclusive, or else India will grow rich without Indians getting rich. Furthermore, with a median age of 28.3 (considering 15-29 years as youth), potential decline of the working-age population, the median age may rise to 30.2 by 2026 and 34.5 by 2036. Such a trend will affect the economy and society.

Another major issue is depopulation in one form or another. It appears that fertility, mortality, out-migration, selective migration, ageing and their combinations have been contributing to this process, which has become almost endemic. Localities, villages, cities, regions and nations are suffering due to depopulation. Ninety small cities and counties that are on the verge of extinction due to remarkable population decline have been designated as "*depopulation areas*". Governments are planning to provide intensive administrative and financial support to help the concerned areas escape from their crisis of extinction. Regarding South Korea, It is interesting to note that the designation of depopulation areas came after the *Special Act on Balanced National Development* was revised late last year and its enforcement decree

was amended in June (Korea Times, 2021). The designation of depopulation areas is a new starting point for the government's efforts to solve the problem of population decline. With this process becoming rampant, governments and planning authorities will be forced to take similar measures. Nonetheless, how will the *depopulated areas* be defined by different governments? Will the reduction of population be the only criterion? In any case, a depopulated nucleus, over time, may take the shape of a *depopulated region*, derailing the concerned social and economic setup.

Population Turmoil – Economy and Future World

As mentioned earlier, China is facing the most hazardous decline in population in decades, setting the stage for potential demographic, economic and even political crises shortly. Moreover, the labour force has been declining since 2012 and is now 40 million fewer than a decade ago, which will be going to affect the economic growth in a stormy manner or more strongly. The World's centre of economic gravity is being shifted eastward due to comparatively rapid population growth. India, with a growing middle-class population and its expanding discretionary spending, will become 3rd third-largest (5.9%) importer by 2050, right behind China and the US. In 2014, the third-biggest economy in PPP terms (India) was around 50 per cent larger than the fourth-biggest economy (Japan). Presently, it ranks 8th amongst the large importing nations and will take over the 4th position by 2030. The share of the European Union and the US is expected to decline in all the import sectors. At the same time, the increasing purchasing power of the middle-class consumers of Asia will account for a larger share of import demand globally.

Experts have estimated that demographic shift or decline data collected amid the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed by the 2020 census, indicate transformations likely to come in U.S. politics. Besides the emergence of COVID-19, it is also part of longer-term declining trends in fertility that show no signs of alteration. These trends have already caused major economic dislocations for the U.S. as well as for the rest of the world. It does not matter how anyone looks at this situation, but population decline is not always good news for the days to come. Perhaps this is the reason for the gradual shift of the world market eastward, and considering the global market U.S. will come down to the 2nd position, leaving the first position for China just within 2030 as projected.

“Though only the population decline or enlargement were not the things affecting the economy over the time. All the facts like, the emergence of the internet, the growth of the Chinese economy and a regime shift in monetary policy played their role. But it's hard to

overlook the impact of population size, which had been a steady tailwind of the US economy after World War II, then became a steady headwind in the late 1980s and will remain so ever since.”

(<https://www.heraldnet.com/opinion/comment-shrinking-population-can-only-hurt-u-s-its-economy/>)

Indonesia has a higher young population base in comparison to Western nations, which indicates a potentially large-active-skilled workforce. However, the recent situation has slowed down the country's birth rate and increased life expectancy at birth. As per the United Nations' projections, almost two-thirds of Indonesia's population (67%) is going to accept an urban lifestyle by the year 2050, though now it is 58 per cent(2020). It is reason to be optimistic for Indonesia's future as well. According to *PricewaterhouseCooper* (2017), Indonesia will be the world's fourth most powerful economy by 2050. In this report entitled “*The Long View – How will the Global Economic Order Change by 2050*,” PwC elaborated on the way the economy of this country will grow based on a rigorous modelling approach. The report says Indonesia's projected rise from the current position as the eighth to the fourth largest world economy behind China, India and the USA, indicates that it is going to dominate the 21st century, though the gap between the third and fourth largest economies may be significant.

The new phase that India's 1.417 billion people may have surpassed China's population puts a spotlight on India in the global market. It is an opportunity for India to reimagine strategies and build on its successes to provide a healthy and happy life for its people, as mentioned by the executive director of the Population Foundation of India. Some experts estimate that India will not hit its population peak until 2065, which means that even if the younger demographic produces only one or two children per couple, the population size will continue to increase over time before it stabilises, driving what PFI calls the “population momentum” (Rajvanshi, 2023). Further...

“India can learn from China's shrinking population by achieving low fertility rates without imposing further population control methods. “India must put an end to the noise around the possible introduction of a two-child norm,” said Muttreja, the executive director of the Population Foundation of India (PFI), adding that a few Southern Indian states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh have already achieved this by providing better access to education and development opportunities.”

(<https://time.com/6248790/india-population-data-china/>)

India's 63 biggest cities with a population of more than one million in 2021

are now home to more than a quarter of its middle class. They also regenerate 29 per cent of the country's disposable income, 27 per cent of total spending and 36 per cent of the total savings that drive demand for goods and services, fuelling an economic boom (Gupta and Sidhartha. 2022). Rapid urbanisation is triggering significant changes across cities, which are emerging as growth centres and swelling the ranks of their middle class. The textile city of Surat in Gujarat has shown the sharpest growth in the number of super-rich households between 2015-16 and 2020-21. A pan-India survey by a think tank, *People Research on India's Consumer Economy* (PRICE), has shown noticeable results and provides an insight into the income demographics and changes taking place in the cities, which are seen as the engines of growth for Asia's third-largest economy. With 2.76 million households, Delhi has the largest middleclass, followed by Mumbai at 2.44 million and Kolkata and Chennai at about 1.60 million each. The Indian prime minister can claim that the nation, which may have just passed China as the world's most populous, is finally meeting its economic potential (Schultz and Beniwal. 2023). According to Nandan Nilekani, the founder of Infosys Ltd, India is on the cusp of huge change. The US-China rivalry is providing a tailwind. India and Vietnam will be big beneficiaries as companies move toward a '*China-plus-one*' strategy, supply-chain analysts claim. Apple Inc.'s three key Taiwanese suppliers have won incentives from the Indian government to boost smartphone production and exports. Morgan Stanley predicts that India will drive a fifth of world expansion this decade, positioning the nation as one of only three that can generate more than US\$400 billion annual output growth. Noteworthy is that the Indian government's manufacturing aspiration is not new. Its '*Make in India*' campaign kicked off in 2014, seeking to emulate China and the tigers of East Asia. Quraishi observed that, besides, a decreasing skilled population across Europe and America has resulted in a shortage of manpower, making India's population an asset that's "politically important and indispensable." Further, he expressed. "Other countries may hate India, but they love our market" (Rajvanshi, 2023).

Becoming the world's most populous country can signal a "paradigm shift" for India's development, Muttreja remarked that is because the country's younger population also comes with a huge potential to boost the economy, what economists usually call the *demographic dividend*. In 2021, the working-age population of India stood at a whopping 900 million, according to OECD data. The Centre for Economics and Business Research predicts India to become a \$10 trillion economy by 2035 (Rajvanshi, 2023).

Despite the advantage of having the maximum young population, the Indian government has not been that successful in prioritising the upskilling of its young people, given that India's labour force participation rate, which accounts for how much of the country's working-age population works or wants to work, is a mere 40

per cent. However, the government has taken certain steps for skill improvement, and for this purpose, a separate ministry has been formed. To absorb the young working population, this country will need to create at least 90 million new non-farming jobs by 2030 (Sankhe, *et al.*, 2020). It has generally been agreed that India can do better by investing in women's equity for economic development.

Conclusion

It appears that the media have become more vibrant in comparison to the traditional sources of information and analysis. Perhaps the decadal censuses are not at par with the frequent developments taking place regarding population worldwide. The interim population surveys or data collection can only meet the requirements partly. The media, armed with access to citizen cards, UDAI in India, sensors, digital traces, websites, mobile phones, bank accounts and recording of other electronic imprints have made an impact in population studies as well. Further, the electronic data is programmable and very soon we should be able to get the macro population trends live. In smaller countries, the whole population's data is online. Hence, dependency on regular censuses and surveys is becoming less relevant. A stage may come when undertaking censuses may not be required at all. Should we, the population scientists, ignore the media as an additional source of information? The experiences of various countries would be varied, as policies framed by the national governments have overall control over the population. The issues related to depopulation, redistribution, ageing, reduction of growth rate, late marriage and the like have been highlighted more by the media. They have a wider outreach and hence can make a bigger impact in society.

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