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Sustainable development strategy in response to the aging population challenge in Vietnam

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Abstract

Vietnam is experiencing one of the fastest population aging transitions globally, shifting from a demographic dividend to an aged society within a short period. This phenomenon poses significant socio-economic challenges, including pressures on the healthcare system, social welfare programs, and the labor force. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, drawing on data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, Vietnamese government policy documents, and global reports by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The findings highlight a rapid demographic shift characterized by declining fertility rates and increased life expectancy, which profoundly impacts labor productivity, healthcare costs, and the social security system. The study proposes solutions such as improving healthcare infrastructure, reforming retirement policies, and enhancing family support systems to mitigate adverse effects. These policy recommendations aim to help Vietnam adapt to population aging and provide valuable lessons for other developing countries facing similar demographic transitions.

Keywords: Policy Implications, Population Aging, Population Policy, Socioeconomic Impacts, Sustainable Development.

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1. Introduction

Population aging refers to the occurrence of a higher percentage of aged people in the overall population of a country or a particular area. Cowgill and Holmes [1] define a *population* as "aging" whenever the percentage of individuals aged 65 and above reaches 7% of the total population. The Elderly Law No. 39/2009/QH12 in Vietnam identifies individuals 60 and above as elderly citizens. This definition differs from the worldwide norms used to calculate the ratio of the aging population [2].

In recent decades, Vietnam has experienced significant shifts in its demographic composition. Since 2007, Vietnam has entered the era of a "golden population structure" with a population of over 62 million working-age individuals. By 2011,

Vietnam had officially transitioned into the aging period as the number of those aged 65 and above reached 7% [3]. According to projections, the percentage is expected to increase to 14% by 2036, indicating a significant shift in the demographic composition [4].

This rapid demographic shift has been driven by a significant decline in fertility rates, from 3.8 children per woman in 1989 to 1.96 children per woman in 2023, well below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman [5]. Simultaneously, life expectancy has risen from 65.2 years in 1989 to 74.5 years in 2023, surpassing the global average [5, 6].

Population aging has profound implications for various socio-economic aspects, particularly healthcare systems, social welfare programs, and the labor market. As the proportion of elderly individuals rises rapidly, the healthcare system faces increased pressure due to the growing demand for chronic and long-term care. Healthcare costs for the elderly are currently 7–8 times higher than those for children [4]. Moreover, the shrinking labor force risks labor shortages, reduced economic productivity, and higher social welfare expenditures, threatening national financial stability [6].

This demographic transition necessitates urgent adjustments to national policies to address emerging challenges. Global studies suggest that timely policy formulation and implementation can mitigate negative impacts and capitalize on opportunities, such as leveraging the potential of the "silver economy" and enhancing the role of older adults in society [7]. However, in Vietnam, current policies—such as retirement age, healthcare support, and social security systems—remain insufficient to meet the growing demands. Comprehensive reforms are required to improve the efficiency of the healthcare system, strengthen social welfare, and promote community engagement in elder care.

Timely preparation and policy modifications are not just necessary, but crucial for this transformation to achieve sustainable national development. Research conducted on a global scale has demonstrated that nations that respond quickly to population aging will experience advantages in sustaining stability and achieving socio-economic growth [1]. Therefore, researching population aging and implementing appropriate policies is imperative to equip Vietnam adequately for the future.

2. Importance of the Matter

Population aging is a worldwide occurrence, but its speed and magnitude fluctuate among various nations. Vietnam is anticipating substantial difficulties in its economy and society due to the rapid growth of its senior population. It is crucial to consider that Vietnam is undergoing the process of population aging while its economy is still in the developmental stage. This phenomenon is known as "aging before wealthy" [6]. According to our projections, by 2036, Vietnam will become an "aged" country. However, the XIII National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam has set a goal for the nation to achieve high-income developed country status by 2045 [8]. Even if Vietnam meets this objective, the country will still face a decade of being "old" before becoming "rich." Moreover, there is uncertainty as to whether Vietnam can reach this target within the remaining 21 years, considering that the industrialization and modernization process has yet to be completed. The risks of economic lag and falling into the "middle-income trap" remain prominent.

In addition to the phenomenon of "ageing before becoming wealthy," the ageing process in Vietnam exhibits several notable characteristics. One significant trend is the "ageing within the oldest age group," indicating that the proportion of elderly individuals in the oldest age category (those aged 80 and above) is rapidly increasing [4]. Furthermore, only approximately 39% of the elderly population receives a pension from the state budget, while the remaining 61% rely entirely on their financial resources [9]. Another concerning aspect is the relatively low healthy life expectancy; on average, individuals over the age of 60 suffer from 3 to 4 chronic conditions, with this number rising to 7 conditions for those over 80 [10]. These conditions primarily include chronic diseases such as osteoarthritis, respiratory disorders, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, and metabolic disorders. This underscores the need for comprehensive healthcare solutions that address not only individual diseases but also the complex interactions between them. Consequently, healthcare costs are significantly higher, amounting to 7-8 times the corresponding expenses for a child [4]. With these characteristics, the ageing process exerts profound impacts on various aspects of the country's socio-economic landscape.

Population aging directly impacts the composition and caliber of the labor force. As the percentage of aged individuals rises, the number of people in the working-age population declines, resulting in a scarcity of labor and higher expenses for social welfare programs [4]. The United Nations People's Fund (UNFPA) predicts that by 2049, Vietnam will undergo a demographic shift and become a "super-aged" society, with more than a quarter of its people being 60 years old or older [4].

Furthermore, the healthcare and social security systems will encounter mounting pressure. The elderly often need increased healthcare services due to their higher prevalence of chronic illnesses, resulting in long-term care and substantial medical expenses [3]. The World Bank in Vietnam suggests that "Vietnam's ageing society and the development of government programs to adapt to this trend are projected to increase additional expenditures by 1.4 to 4.6% of GDP [6]. Vietnam's healthcare system is inadequate in satisfying these needs, necessitating substantial reforms to improve the quality of medical treatment for the aged [6].

Moreover, the research and development of strategies to address the challenges posed by population aging are not just important, but crucial for Vietnam. This research offers valuable insights for other nations, and Vietnam can learn from the experiences of nations that have already undergone the aging process to adopt appropriate and efficient policies [1]. This study not only enhances our understanding of the aging process but also offers practical policy suggestions to effectively capitalize on opportunities and mitigate the adverse effects of this phenomenon. Vietnam's approach to addressing population aging also provides valuable lessons for many other countries, as this issue is not unique to any nation.

3. Literature Review

Population aging is a global phenomenon that has garnered significant attention from researchers. According to the UNFPA [4], aging populations profoundly affect social structures and pose substantial challenges to social security systems and healthcare. In developed countries like Japan and South Korea, population aging has decreased labor productivity, increased healthcare costs, and heightened pressure on pension funds [6]. These studies emphasize the necessity of sustainable policy solutions to address the complex issues arising from aging societies.

Many nations have implemented innovative policies to tackle population aging. Japan, one of the world's most aged societies, has promoted the "silver economy" by raising the retirement age and encouraging companies to employ older workers [11]. South Korea has adopted programs to incentivize childbirth and provide financial support to families with multiple children to slow the pace of aging [7]. These experiences offer valuable lessons but highlight that not all solutions are universally applicable, particularly in developing countries.

Although extensive research has analyzed the impacts of population aging and associated policy responses, few studies focus on Vietnam's unique context, where the phenomenon of "aging before becoming rich" unfolds rapidly. Vietnam faces distinctive challenges, such as an underdeveloped economy, an incomplete social security system, and significant urban-rural disparities [5]. Most prior studies have concentrated on describing the current aging state without providing solutions tailored to Vietnam's socioeconomic conditions.

This study addresses this gap in the literature by focusing on the phenomenon of "aging before becoming rich" in Vietnam. It proposes specific policy solutions, including improving the healthcare system, strengthening social welfare infrastructure, and leveraging the potential of the "silver economy." The study offers practical recommendations based on international experiences while adapting them to Vietnam's specific context.

4. Theoretical Framework

Population aging, a phenomenon observed in the context of globalization and socio-economic progress, is examined from multiple angles within demography, economics, and sociology. This study is grounded in three primary theories: Demographic Transition Theory, Economic Theory of Population Aging, and Long-term Care Systems Theory. These theories are particularly relevant to the study of population aging in Vietnam as they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the demographic shift, evaluating the economic consequences, and analyzing the existing long-term care system in the country.

The Demographic Transition Theory elucidates the progression from a civilization characterized by elevated birth and death rates to one marked by diminished birth and death rates. Notestein [12] outlines a four-stage process: (1) the pre-transition stage, characterized by high birth and death rates and consequently slow population growth; (2) the transition stage, marked by a decline in death rates and consequent rapid population growth; (3) the post-transition stage, characterized by a decrease in birth rates and a resulting slowdown in population growth; and (4) the post-transition stage, characterized by low birth and death rates, leading to a stable or slightly declining population [12]. Vietnam is presently at the concluding phase of this progression, characterized by a substantial decline in the birth rate and a rise in life expectancy, resulting in a phenomenon known as population aging.

The Economic Theory of Population Aging explicitly examines the economic consequences of population aging. According to this idea, as the population ages, there is a decline in the proportion of working-age people while the proportion of dependents increases. It puts strain on the social security system and the national budget. According to Samuelson [13] population aging can decrease the national savings rate and impede economic growth [13]. However, if effectively supervised, an aging laborer can provide valuable expertise and steadfastness to the economy, offering a potential silver lining to the challenges of population aging [11].

The Long-term Care Systems Theory focuses on the significance of healthcare and social services in assisting the aging population. Estes and Binney [14] argue that a comprehensive long-term care system should encompass home healthcare services, long-term care institutions, and family support programs. In the context of Vietnam, the existing long-term care system includes [specific details about the system]. This strategy not only enhances the well-being of the elderly but also alleviates the strain on families and the public healthcare system.

This study utilizes all three theories to examine the phenomenon of population aging in Vietnam. We focus on studying Vietnam's demographic shift, evaluating the economic consequences of population aging, and analyzing the existing long-term care system. Utilizing these theories aids in comprehending the origins, outcomes, and requisite remedies for tackling population aging in Vietnam. Your expertise in demography, economics, and sociology is crucial in this endeavor, and your contributions will be integral to finding effective solutions.

Research methodology refers to the systematic and scientific approach used to conduct research. It involves selecting appropriate methods, techniques, and tools to collect and analyze data to answer research questions or tests. This article utilizes an empirical research methodology incorporating quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data is gathered from national statistics, research studies issued by foreign organizations, and policy documents released by the Party and the Government of Vietnam. This methodology enables a thorough comprehension of the dynamics and subtleties of population aging in Vietnam, offering insights into both the quantifiable patterns and the qualitative effects on society and policy.

Please note that all information and data in this article are permitted for use and publicly accessible through various media outlets; therefore, the authors do not need to seek permission from any organization.

5. Findings of the Research

5.1. The Present Situation of Population Aging in Vietnam

The phenomenon of population aging has been a pressing issue in Vietnam in recent decades. As reported by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, Vietnam entered the population aging period in 2011 when the percentage of people aged 65 and beyond reached 7% of the total population [3]. According to projections, the rate is expected to reach 14% by 2036, leading Vietnam to be classified as an 'aged' society [4]. This rapid increase in the aging population underscores the urgent need for proactive measures.

5.2. The Accelerated Pace of Population Aging in Vietnam

Vietnam's population is aging at a much faster rate than that of developed nations like Japan and South Korea, which had stronger economic foundations and more robust social security systems when they entered similar demographic transitions. While Japan took approximately 24 years to progress from an aging society (7% of the population aged ≥ 65) to an aged society (14%), Vietnam is expected to make this transition in just 25 years, despite having an underdeveloped economy [6].

Table 1.
Transition Timeline for Population Aged ≥ 65 in Selected Countries.

Country	Year Reaching 7% Population Aged ≥ 65	Year Reaching 14% Population Aged ≥ 65	Transition Duration (Years)
Japan	1970	1994	24
South Korea	2000	2017	17
Vietnam	2011	2036 (projected)	25

This rapid demographic shift imposes significant pressure not only on the healthcare system but also on various economic and social sectors.

The overall fertility rate in Vietnam has experienced a substantial decline, dropping from 3.8 children per woman in 1989 to 2.09 in 2019 and further decreasing to 1.96 in 2023 [5]. The current fertility rate is lower than the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman required to keep the population steady, resulting in an increase in the number of older individuals. As of February 9, 2023, the National Population Database documented 16,179,824 individuals who are 60 years old or older. This group represents approximately 17% of the entire population, making it one of the highest rates of population aging globally.

In addition to implementing economic reforms, Vietnam has achieved notable advancements in healthcare. Surveys taken from 1989 to the present indicate a consistent and ongoing increase in the average life expectancy in Vietnam. Between 1989 and 2019, the average life expectancy increased from 65.2 to 73.6 years. By 2023, it rose to 74.5 years, surpassing the global average of 73.4 years [5]. This rise indicates progress in healthcare and living standards, but also presents notable difficulties for aged care in Vietnam.

Between 2009 and 2019, Vietnam increased its overall population from 88.85 million to 96.21 million. During this period, the percentage of senior individuals also rose from 8.68% to 11.86% [3]. According to the UNFPA 2021 report, Vietnam is projected to have a population where those aged 60 and above will make up around 25% of the total population by 2049. It places Vietnam among the countries with the highest rates of population aging globally [4].

The phenomenon of population aging has a profound impact on various facets of Vietnamese society. In economic terms, it decreases the percentage of the younger workforce, creating strain on the pension system and social welfare programs [11, 15]. However, the most significant impact is on the healthcare system, which necessitates a greater need for healthcare services, specifically in the management of chronic illnesses and long-term care [6]. Vietnam's existing healthcare system is struggling to meet these requirements, necessitating substantial investment and reform.

Although there has been notable advancement, there remains a substantial discrepancy in healthcare and social welfare services availability among various regions and demographic groups. Rural and ethnic minority populations frequently experience limited availability of high-quality healthcare services, resulting in reduced access for the elderly compared to urban populations [16].

The Vietnamese government has enacted various measures to tackle population aging, such as implementing healthcare services specifically tailored for the elderly and introducing laws that promote births. However, these efforts, while commendable, are not sufficient to address the swift pace of population aging. The current measures are inadequate, and more effective solutions are needed to manage this demographic shift [4].

5.3. Factors Contributing to Accelerated Aging

Vietnam is undergoing a swift demographic transition characterized by a significant increase in the proportion of elderly individuals, which can be attributed to various influential reasons. This study highlights three main factors: the overall fertility rate decrease, the rise in average life expectancy, and socio-economic changes.

A primary factor contributing to population aging is the substantial decline in the overall fertility rate. Between 1989 and 2023, Vietnam saw a significant decline in fertility rate, which decreased from 3.8 to 1.96 children per woman. This decline is noteworthy since it has fallen below the replacement level of 2.1, which is necessary to sustain a stable population [5]. The drop can be attributed to the effective implementation of robust family planning measures in recent decades. Moreover, the substantial expenses linked to giving birth and raising children, and shifts in societal attitudes and ways of

living have contributed to this decline [16]. A decreasing fertility rate indicates a forthcoming decrease in the labor force, inevitably resulting in more older individuals.

Advancements in healthcare and improved living conditions have led to a substantial increase in the average life expectancy of Vietnamese individuals. The average life expectancy increased from 65.2 years in 1989 to 74.5 years in 2023 [5]. This rise in life expectancy has significant implications, leading to more individuals reaching advanced ages, resulting in a higher percentage of elderly individuals within the population. This, in turn, places increased demands on healthcare and social security systems, as the elderly population typically requires more medical care and financial support [4].

Socio-economic changes have significantly influenced population aging. Over the past four decades, Vietnam's economy has undergone substantial transformations. The implementation of the *Đổi Mới* (Renovation) policy in 1996 marked a turning point, leading Vietnam out of a severe socio-economic crisis. This achievement was acknowledged by the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1996 [17]. In 2008, Vietnam transitioned from a low-income nation to a lower-middle-income one. The rapid economic progress resulted in changes in family compositions and ways of living. Contemporary families typically have a reduced number of offspring due to the increased expenses associated with raising and educating children and changes in cultural perspectives regarding women's roles in society and the workforce. These socio-economic changes have a profound impact on population aging, necessitating urgent policy responses and initiatives.

Despite Vietnam reaching replacement fertility levels in 2006, the population policy persisted in advocating for further reductions in fertility rates for a prolonged duration. The issuance of the Communist Party of Vietnam's Resolution No. 21-NQ/TW to alter fertility levels according to new circumstances occurred in 2017 [18]. In 2020, the Prime Minister of Vietnam signed Decision No. 588/QĐ-TTg, which approved the "Program to Adjust Fertility Rates According to Regions and Targets up to 2030". This decision, which includes a list of provinces and cities applying different fertility rates for 2020-2025, Bộ Y Tế [19] aims to control birth rates in regions with high fertility to address concerns about a population explosion [20]. However, the lack of timely policy adjustments has exacerbated the swift progression of population aging. This highlights the need for proactive and timely measures to address these demographic shifts.

Population aging has been further exacerbated by urbanization and the migration of people from rural to urban areas. A significant number of young individuals relocate to urban centers in pursuit of job prospects, resulting in the elderly population being left behind in rural regions. The demographic shift in rural areas is characterized by an increase in the senior population and a decline in the fertility rate, caused mainly by a scarcity of young workers [16]. In urban settings, young individuals encounter considerable challenges in securing employment and housing, establishing stable work arrangements, and meeting high living expenses that surpass their income levels. These challenges often lead to delayed marriage and parenthood, as well as a restriction on the number of children they have due to apprehensions about the financial burdens associated with raising children. For instance, Vietnam's house price to income ratio is projected to reach 24 times in 2024, whereas the recommended ratio should ideally range between 5 to 7 times.

Consequently, these circumstances prompt them to delay marriage and parenthood and restrict the number of children they have due to apprehensions about the financial burdens associated with raising children. A report released by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam in July 2024 revealed that the average age at first marriage in Ho Chi Minh City has reached 30.4, the highest it has ever been [21]. This trend is contributing to a low birth rate and causing the population to age faster.

These reasons not only account for the swift rise in the percentage of aged individuals in the Vietnamese population but also provide substantial difficulties for the healthcare and social security systems. However, with appropriate policy responses and initiatives, we can effectively address these challenges and ensure a sustainable future for Vietnam's aging population.

5.4. Effects of Population Aging

The phenomenon of population aging in Vietnam has significant implications for all facets of its economy and society. This study examines the primary effects on the job market, healthcare system, social welfare, and family dynamics.

Effects on the Job Market. Population aging is not just a future concern, but a pressing issue that is already affecting the job market in Vietnam. The decline in the proportion of working-age individuals, as shown by research conducted by Bloom, et al. [11] is leading to a fall in labor productivity and increased expenses associated with social welfare programs [11]. The workforce in Vietnam saw a rise in the percentage of individuals aged 60 and over, from 8.68% in 2009 to 11.86% in 2019 [3]. This increase presents considerable difficulties in sustaining and advancing the economy.

The proportion of Vietnam's working-age population has been steadily declining, from 64% of the total population in 2010 to 57% in 2023 [5]. This trend poses risks of labor shortages and reduced labor productivity, directly impacting economic growth.

Countries like Japan have addressed similar challenges by raising the retirement age to 65 and even 70 to alleviate pressure on the labor force [11]. Vietnam could consider increasing the retirement age to 62 for men and 60 for women, as previously proposed. However, such measures must be accompanied by policies focused on reskilling and upskilling older workers and encouraging continued participation in the labor market to ensure sustainable economic development.

Challenges in the Healthcare System. Vietnam's healthcare system is currently grappling with significant issues due to the aging population [22]. Healthcare costs for the elderly in Vietnam are 7–8 times higher than those for children, while the country's healthcare system remains under development [4]. The prevalence of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, and osteoarthritis is on the rise, necessitating substantial investments in healthcare infrastructure and long-term care systems.

Lessons from countries like Japan offer valuable insights. Japan has addressed similar challenges by establishing geriatric hospitals and developing home-care services tailored to the elderly. Adapting these solutions could help Vietnam enhance its healthcare system to meet the demands of its aging society.

According to a study by Maestas et al. [23], healthcare expenses rise considerably as the population ages, particularly in long-term care services and the management of chronic diseases [23]. Vietnam's healthcare system urgently needs substantial investment in healthcare infrastructure and services to adequately address these demands [6].

Pressure on the Social Welfare System. The social welfare system in Vietnam is under significant strain due to the aging population. UNFPA [4] states that the growing number of seniors necessitates an enhanced social welfare system encompassing retirement programs, social assistance, and additional support services [4]. However, the reality is that many older adults in Vietnam lack a pension or receive meager social welfare payments, leading to poverty and uncertainty [16].

According to the World Bank [6], the costs of social security programs in Vietnam are projected to rise from 1.4% to 4.6% of GDP to meet the needs of an aging population. However, only 39% of older adults in Vietnam currently receive pensions, placing a significant financial burden on families and society.

This gap highlights the urgent need for reforms in social security policies, including expanding pension coverage and ensuring financial sustainability to address the growing demands of an aging demographic.

Family Dynamics. In Vietnam, the family serves as the central caring entity for the elderly. However, alterations in family compositions and lifestyles have impacted their ability to provide care [24]. The process of urbanization and the subsequent migration of people from rural to urban regions have resulted in a decline in family cohesion and an increase in the responsibility of younger generations to provide care [16]. Research has indicated that the absence of public care services and social support places additional strain on families responsible for caring for older individuals [15].

Economic Development. Population aging has a profound impact on Vietnam's overall economic development. The country is at risk of experiencing reduced economic growth due to a shortage of youthful workers and higher social welfare costs due to its low birth rate and high life expectancy [11]. The diminishing domestic labor market and the decrease in inexpensive labor diminish Vietnam's appeal to foreign investors [25]. The aging process causes a decline in the labor force, leading to a fall in the number of people contributing to tax payments. Consequently, this leads to a reduction in government tax revenues, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable solutions to this economic challenge.

In contrast, the government must allocate more funds to provide financial assistance and healthcare services for the elderly. According to the World Bank in Vietnam, the country's aging population and government initiatives to address this issue are projected to result in a 1.4 - 4.6% increase in additional expenditure as a percentage of GDP [6]. Without higher revenue or fiscal equilibrium, Vietnam may confront long-lasting budget shortfalls, which would heighten the likelihood of debt buildup and jeopardize national financial stability, posing a threat to macroeconomic stability.

Vietnam must modify its economic policies and population strategy to ensure sustainable development despite an aging population.

6. Recommendations and Solutions

6.1. Improving the Policy System

Enhancing the policy framework is a pressing necessity for Vietnam to tackle population aging successfully. This report presents several concrete proposals to improve and strengthen the policy structure related to population and social welfare.

Modifying Reproductive Policies: The government should persist in adapting population programs to stimulate births, particularly in regions experiencing low birth rates [26]. The Communist Party of Vietnam, in Resolution No. 21-NQ/TW, stressed the importance of promoting the idea of couples having two children [18]. Modifications to these programs may encompass fiscal assistance measures, tax deductions, and additional social welfare policies to bolster families with many offspring. Modifying population policies necessitates revising and synchronizing rules throughout the Labor Law, Social Insurance Law, Gender Equality Law, and Elderly Law.

Promoting Population Awareness: It is crucial to establish educational and communication initiatives to increase public awareness regarding population aging and the significance of sustaining replacement fertility rates [16]. Vietnam should contemplate amending the 2009 Elderly Law to increase the threshold for being classified as elderly from 60 to 65, to conform with the legislation of many countries globally, and to reflect the progress in medical science and the present health condition of the Vietnamese populace. This will ensure that everyone is well-informed and educated about the issue [27].

Increasing the Age of Retirement: Extending the retirement age is a crucial strategy for preserving the workforce in the face of population aging. Presently, the retirement age in Vietnam is 60 for males and 55 for females. However, it will gradually rise to 62 for males and 60 for females by 2035. Implementing this measure will alleviate strain on the pension system and ensure the stability of the workforce. It's important to note that many countries have already extended the retirement age to 65, which could be further extended. This extension not only ensures the stability of the workforce but also allows older individuals to continue contributing to the economy and society, without significantly impacting the availability of jobs for younger individuals [6].

Furthermore, a significant proportion of the elderly population in Vietnam, precisely around 60% of those aged 60-69, engage in self-employment or contribute to unpaid household labor [28]. Many senior adults possess extensive expertise and exceptional proficiency in diverse domains, enabling them to sustain employment. Employment opportunities for older individuals often do not significantly impact the availability of jobs for younger individuals. In order to facilitate the elderly's ability to remain employed, it is necessary to establish favorable conditions that provide them with access to production financing and guarantee their labor rights and legal entitlements during their job [29]. Creating employment platforms specifically for older individuals can harness their expertise and abilities, enabling them to make ongoing contributions to society [30].

Promoting the Hiring of Senior Employees: According to Article 148, Clause 3, of the 2019 Labor Code, the utilization of older workers in occupations that are appropriate for their physical well-being is promoted [31]. The government should

play a proactive role in implementing laws that incentivize firms to hire older adults, such as tax deductions, financial assistance, or programs to retrain older employees. This could be achieved through the establishment of specific policies and the allocation of resources to support these initiatives [32]. These measures not only contribute to the decrease in unemployment rates but also utilize the expertise and abilities of older workers [11]. The 2019 Labor Code includes a provision that grants senior workers the opportunity to negotiate with employers over reducing daily working hours or implementing part-time work schedules. This provision will be adequate starting from 2021 [31].

Establishing a Long-Term Care System: Substantial funding is required to develop the infrastructure for long-term care, which involves constructing aged care facilities and expanding home care services. A study conducted by Maestas, et al. [23] demonstrates that allocating resources to the long-term care system can alleviate strain on hospitals and enhance the well-being of older individuals [23].

Enhancing the Social Insurance System: Enhancing the social insurance system is imperative to providing universal access to healthcare and financial assistance for all senior individuals. Possible measures encompass broadening insurance coverage, enhancing benefit levels, and streamlining administrative procedures [4].

Assisting Families in Caring for Elderly Relatives: Policies that provide financial assistance and services to families responsible for the care of elderly relatives must be established. These policies should include allowances for care, training programs for caregivers, and services that support care provided at home. This assistance alleviates the strain on families and enhances the standard of care for the elderly [16].

Promoting Community Engagement: Creating community-oriented initiatives and resources to assist the elderly, such as organizing volunteer opportunities, establishing elderly clubs, and providing social support services, is crucial. Active community involvement can establish a strong and resilient support system for the elderly and their families, making everyone feel part of the solution [6].

Improving the policy system necessitates strong collaboration among government departments and active engagement from social organizations and the community. The strategies above will enable Vietnam to address population aging and ensure long-term sustainable growth properly, underscoring the crucial roles of each stakeholder [6].

6.2. Evolution of the Healthcare and Social Welfare System

The growth of the healthcare and social welfare system is essential in adequately tackling the problem of population aging. This report presents a range of targeted solutions to improve and bolster the efficacy of Vietnam's healthcare and social welfare system.

Enhancing Healthcare Infrastructure Investment: It is imperative to augment investment in healthcare infrastructure, including establishing and enhancing hospitals, medical centers, and long-term care facilities. It is especially crucial in rural and isolated regions where healthcare services remain restricted [3]. It is imperative to enhance the quality of primary healthcare locally to alleviate the strain on higher-level hospitals and minimize expenses and time for those seeking medical care [33]. An extensive network dedicated to the management of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, arthritis, diabetes, and cancer, should be built and reinforced. Additionally, novel approaches should be used to enable early detection and provide long-term treatment for seniors with chronic illnesses.

Evolution of Geriatrics: To address the healthcare requirements of the aged population, it is imperative to establish and incorporate geriatrics as a subject in medical colleges and training facilities. This initiative aims to cultivate a pool of medical practitioners and healthcare professionals who possess specialized knowledge and skills in geriatric care [16]. The government should enhance the nationwide infrastructure of geriatric hospitals (similar to the pediatric hospital system) to cater to the increasing old population [34].

Utilization of Information Technology: Information technology in managing and providing healthcare services can enhance efficiency and the quality of care. Implementing electronic health records and online healthcare services would enhance accessibility to medical treatments for the senior population [6].

Advancement of Home Care Services: It is imperative to enhance the provision of home care services for the elderly, encompassing medical assistance, assistance with everyday activities, and psychological therapy. This intervention promotes the autonomy of older individuals and alleviates the strain on healthcare institutions [4]. An efficient "Family Doctor" system can mitigate the burden on hospitals and lower patients' expenses [35].

Financial Assistance for In-Home Care: The government must implement financial assistance initiatives for families and institutions that provide home care services. These subsidies can alleviate the economic strain on families and promote the growth of home care services. Nguyen, born in 2023, is currently 37 years old.

Increasing the scope of health insurance coverage: Health insurance covers 95% of the older population [36]. Nevertheless, health insurance solely encompasses fundamental services and typical prescriptions, excluding unique treatments, health screenings, and rehabilitation expenses. The aged and their families find this to be a significant hardship, as the elderly frequently require specialized drugs and rehabilitation services. Consequently, broadening the scope of health insurance coverage is imperative to guarantee that every senior citizen can avail themselves of essential medical services without encountering financial obstacles. Efforts must be made to enhance the management and distribution of health insurance services [3].

Enhancing Pension Policies: A consistent and reliable source of income is crucial for a tranquil retirement. Informal labor in Vietnam constitutes a substantial percentage, with 70% of informal workers residing in rural regions [37]. Should these workers lack social insurance coverage, their offspring will ultimately shoulder the responsibility upon retirement, presenting a substantial predicament for the nation's healthcare system in the foreseeable future. Consequently, there is a need for enhancement in pension policies [38]. These measures include augmenting pension amounts, elevating monthly

assistance for senior individuals lacking pensions, and broadening voluntary pension initiatives to encompass informal workers [6].

Creating Social Service Centers: The government must construct social service centers in communities to offer comprehensive support services for the elderly, encompassing counseling, legal aid, and social engagement. These centers have the potential to serve as focal points for the community and assist the elderly in their day-to-day tasks [16].

Promoting the Involvement of Social Organizations and Communities: It is crucial to promote the active participation of social organizations and communities in offering care and support services for the elderly. Non-governmental organizations, volunteer groups, and community organizations can enhance public services and bolster the support network [4]. The importance of the old Association in the "All People Care for and Promote the Role of the elderly" movement should be highlighted to ensure the elderly lead a contented, healthy, and fulfilling life within their family and society.

The development of the healthcare and social welfare system necessitates the government's responsibility and strong collaboration among state institutions, social groups, and the community. The initiatives above will enhance the elderly's quality of life and establish advantageous circumstances for Vietnam to address population aging.

6.3. Promoting Higher Birth Rates and Improving the Quality of the Workforce

To effectively address the challenges posed by population aging, Vietnam must adopt strategies that promote higher birth rates and enhance the quality of its workforce. These efforts not only support the maintenance of a reasonable birth rate but also guarantee the presence of a high-quality workforce, which in turn contributes to the country's sustainable growth.

Financial Assistance for Families with Multiple Children: The National Assembly of Vietnam in 2017 emphasized the importance of promoting the idea of couples having two children to sustain replacement fertility rates [18]. The proposed Population Law aims to grant families the autonomy to determine the quantity and timing of childbearing. However, to raise the birth rate to a level that replaces the population, it is crucial to introduce financial aid initiatives, such as direct monetary subsidies, tax deductions, and educational expense help for families with more than one child. This support will provide families with a sense of security and encourage them to consider expanding their families.

Establishing an Optimal Environment for Child-Rearing: The government ought to prolong the duration of maternity leave granted to women, augment the quantity of paid leave days allocated for tending to ill youngsters, and provide adaptable employment arrangements for parents with children below the age of six. The government ought to allocate funds towards social infrastructure, including nurseries, schools, and childcare services, to assist families. Establishing a conducive atmosphere for raising children will reduce the challenges parents face and motivate them to increase their offspring [16].

Promoting Consciousness and Altering Societal Perspectives: Educational and communication initiatives must be introduced to enhance public understanding of the significance of maintaining replacement fertility rates. Concurrently, cultural perspectives on women's roles in both the family and society must be altered to promote a harmonious equilibrium between work and family life [4].

Allocation of resources towards education: Given the declining labor market resulting from the ongoing trend of an aging population, enhancing the quality of education will effectively equip the upcoming generation to fulfill the demands of the labor market [6]. Substantial investment in the education system, from early childhood education to tertiary education, is vital to guarantee universal access to top-notch education and foster the development of highly skilled individuals.

Designing Vocational Training Programs: Vocational training programs must be created to align with the current demands of the job market. It is imperative to have programs that are developed with flexibility and are periodically updated in order to enable workers to effectively adjust to technological and economic changes [16].

Encouraging lifelong learning involves fostering the growth of continuous education and retraining initiatives for workers. These programs aim to enhance their skills and knowledge, increasing their competitiveness in the labor market [4].

Promoting Adaptive Work Arrangements: Fostering the provision of adaptable work arrangements, such as part-time employment, telecommuting, or positions tailored to the capabilities and well-being of older employees, serves to sustain the labor force while capitalizing on the expertise and competencies of older workers [11]. This approach not only ensures the retention of experienced workers but also makes them feel valued and respected, contributing to a positive work environment.

Implementing training and retraining programs for older workers is crucial for updating their knowledge and abilities and enabling them to adapt to technological advancements and changes in the labor market. It will ensure that they can continue contributing to the economy.

Gaining knowledge from other nations: Vietnam can gain valuable insights from countries that have effectively promoted higher birth rates and enhanced workforce quality. Engaging in international cooperation programs and exchanging experiences will assist Vietnam in implementing efficient policies and measures [16]. This collaboration offers a promising outlook, as Vietnam can strategically adopt the knowledge and practices from other nations in areas such as labor regime innovation, pension systems, social welfare systems for elderly care, and developing healthcare infrastructure that caters to an aging population. Additionally, Vietnam should focus on nurturing the elderly care industry to address the challenges of an aging population effectively.

Attracting International Resources: It is crucial to enhance the appeal of financial and technical resources from international organizations to support birth encouragement programs and enhance the quality of education and training. This collaboration will enable Vietnam to leverage international resources and expertise to achieve sustainable development [4].

Promoting higher birth rates and enhancing workforce quality are crucial elements in tackling population aging and maintaining the long-term sustainability of Vietnam's development. Adopting the aforementioned actions in a complete and efficient manner is crucial to attaining this objective [39].

In the context of an increasingly aging population, several strategic policies can play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of economic and social systems.

First, raising the retirement age helps reduce pressure on pension funds and takes advantage of the experienced workforce. However, for this policy to achieve maximum effectiveness, it must be combined with retraining programs to ensure older workers can adapt to the demands of the modern labor market.

In addition, developing long-term care systems is necessary to support the elderly population. Investing in home-care services and geriatric hospitals will ease the burden on the current healthcare system and improve the quality of life for older adults. Japan's experience implementing these services can provide valuable lessons to ensure practical and effective application.

Finally, to cope with the pressures of aging trends, encouraging childbirth is a long-term solution. Learning from South Korea's financial support policies for families with multiple children can increase fertility rates, helping to rebalance the population structure.

When implemented simultaneously, these measures will create favorable conditions to maintain stability and sustainable development in the long term.

7. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the challenges posed by population aging in Vietnam while proposing policy solutions to mitigate negative impacts and leverage opportunities arising from this trend. The findings provide an in-depth understanding of the current state of population aging in Vietnam and suggest practical policy measures. The government and policymakers can utilize these results to develop strategies to address population aging and ensure sustainable development. Furthermore, the study offers valuable lessons for other developing countries facing similar demographic phenomena.

With the rapid pace of aging and the phenomenon of "aging before becoming rich," Vietnam faces significant challenges in healthcare, social welfare, and the labor market. The results highlight that improving healthcare infrastructure, adjusting retirement policies, and encouraging childbirth are critical measures that need to be implemented. However, the study has limitations, including reliance on secondary data from reports and statistics, which may not fully capture the local context. The proposed solutions are also based on international experiences and theoretical approaches, without practical testing in Vietnam's specific conditions.

To address these limitations, future research should focus on field surveys to collect direct data from older population groups, households, and stakeholders impacted by population aging. Moreover, piloting the recommended policies in specific regions can help assess their feasibility and practical effectiveness. Expanding research into the role of technology in elder care and raising demographic awareness will also be essential for developing more comprehensive solutions.

Population aging is not merely a demographic issue but a significant socio-economic challenge that requires coordinated action from government agencies, communities, and international organizations. This study calls on policymakers to urgently improve social welfare systems, invest in healthcare infrastructure, and support families in childbearing. Building a comprehensive strategy with specific, actionable steps will enable Vietnam to respond to population aging and turn this challenge into an opportunity to drive sustainable development in the future.

The study provides a comprehensive overview of the current situation and potential solutions to address population aging in Vietnam. The findings are practical in terms of policy implications and serve as a critical foundation for long-term strategies to ensure the nation's stability and sustainable development in a challenging demographic context.

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Appendices

Table 1.

Key Factors Contributing to Population Aging in Vietnam

Factor	Data/Example	Source
Declining fertility rate	3.8 children per woman (1989) → 1.96 (2023)	Turabian [40]
Increased life expectancy	65.2 years (1989) → 74.5 years (2023)	Turabian [40]
Slow economic growth	Per capita GDP lower than developed countries at the onset of aging	UNFPA [4]

Table 2.

Impacts of Population Aging on Various Sectors.

Sector	Impact	Illustrative Data	Source
Healthcare	Increased healthcare costs	Healthcare costs for the elderly 7–8 times higher than for children	UNFPA [4]
Labor	Decline in the working-age population	Workforce proportion dropped from 64% (2010) → 57% (2023)	Turabian [40]
Social welfare	Increased pressure on pension funds	Only 39% of older adults receive pensions	Turabian [40]