Socioeconomic Development and Population Aging in Asia: A Comparison of China, South Korea, and Japan

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Main Contents

• 1. Introduction
• 2. Socioeconomic transformation
• 3. Demographic transition
• 4. Population aging
• 5. Conclusion
Comparison among Japan, Korea and China

• **Similarities**

• 1. Confucian cultural sphere (or Chinese cultural sphere) – Using Chinese character, Confucianism, Buddhism, patriarchal stem family, tradition of ancestor worship, predominance of men over women

• 2. Filial piety - Japan (ko), Korea (hyo), China (Xiao)

• 3. Population transition from high birth and death rates to low rates in a short period of time – successful family planning programs

• 4. Economic development in a short period of time – Japan (1960s), Korea (1970s), China (economic liberation since 1978)


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Comparison among Japan, Korea and China

Differences

1. Korea and China were invaded by Japan.
   - Japan as a defeated nation tried to abolish the patriarchal system (pre-war tradition).
   - Korea try to maintain the traditional family system for a national identity.
   - China as a socialist state do not try to break its traditional family system.

2. Japan/Korea vs China:
   - Korea has followed almost the same courses as Japan (economic growth, social welfare, postwar baby boom, birth control, national pension system, national insurance system, social welfare law).
   - China has not yet established a unified nationwide system.
Socioeconomic transformation in the East Asia
Figure 1. Comparison of population trends in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2050)
Figure 2. Comparison of population growth rate in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2050)
Figure 3. Comparison of GDP per capita among Japan, Korea and China (1994-2003)
Figure 4. Comparison of Trends of urbanization in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2000)
Demographic transition in the East Asia
Demographic transition in Japan

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Main characteristics of demographic transition in Japan

- Fertility rose rapidly after World War II.
- First baby boom: 1947(34.3), 1948(33.5), 1949(33.0).
- Both fertility and mortality began to drop since 1950.
- Sudden drop to 13.6 in 1966 (year of horse): 1965(18.6), 1970(18.8). – A woman born in the year of horse is believed to destroy her husband.
- The mortality rate was 11.6 in 1947.
- The mortality rate began to fall below 10 for the time in 1951(9.9).
- Japan became a society with low fertility and low mortality since the middle of 1970s.
- The average life expectancy at birth surpassed 70 years in 1960 for women and 1975 for men.
- 1.57 shock” in 1989
Figure 2. Demographic transition in Korea (1960 - 2005)
The demographic transition in Korea began in the mid-1960s.

- The mortality continued to decline, from 16 per thousand in 1960 to 5.3 per thousand in 1996.

- The fertility also continuously declined, from 42 per thousand in 1965 to 15.2 per thousand in 1996.
First fertility transition in Korea (1960-1985)

• Prevention of infectious and contagious diseases
• Improvement of environmental conditions
• Improvement of public health facilities
• Construction of sewage and water ways
• Medical schools and facilities
• Family planning programs
• Rising age at marriage
• Induced abortion
• Enhancement of the educational level
Second fertility transition in Korea (from 1985 to the present)

- Recent socioeconomic transformation
- Globalization
- Expansion of education
- Labor market insecurity
- Family formation and dissolution
- Gender equity orientation
- Changes in life style (well-being)
Figure 3. Demographic transition in China (1960-2005)
China: Before 1949, both fertility and mortality were high.

After the People’s Republic of China was founded, the speed of mortality decreased much faster than that of fertility.

During the period from 1949 to 1957, the CDR decreased from 2% to 1%.

In 1970, the CDR in China dropped to 7.6 per 1,000.

In 1990, the CDR in China declined to 6.7 per 1,000, and almost reached the level of advanced countries.
Since 1970’s, China has introduced family planning which has successfully controlled fertility for a short time.

The crude birth rate dropped sharply from 34.1 per thousand in 1969 to 17.8 per thousand in 1979. Generally it takes 50-100 years to reduce fertility rate by half, but it took China only 10 years to achieve it.
Figure 4. Comparison of demographic transition in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2005)
Figure 5. Trends of TFR in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2005)
Figure 6. Comparison of life expectancy in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2050)
Figure 12. Comparison of median age in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2050)
Population aging in the East Asia
Aging

Modernization

Mortality decline

Fertility decline

Modernization

Urbanization

Industrialization

Education

Medical technology

Increased productivity

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### Table 9. The speed of population aging in selected countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>7%</th>
<th>14%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>7-14%</th>
<th>14-20%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>2036</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2028</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>41</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>80+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Asia</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 10. Comparison of proportion of the elderly (65+) in Japan, Korea and China (1960-2050)
Table 11. Comparison of the educational attainment of the elderly by sex in Japan, Korea and China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>China</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No education</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>63.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elementary S.</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle S.</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College and</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 12. Comparison of the living arrangements of the elderly in Japan, Korea and China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse only</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Living arrangements of the elderly by region in Japan, Korea and China
The same factor of the three countries:

The drastic decline of the birth rate was realized under the strong leadership of centralized government

Policy of birth control in the three countries:

- **Japan**, in 1952, nationwide public health and Eugenic Protection Act
- **Korea**, since 1962, family planning
- **China**, since 1979, “One Child Policy” (mainly in urban area)
Differences of population aging between East Asia and Europe and America

• (1) Japan, Korea and China have experienced rapid economic growth and a rapidly population aging at about the same time.

• (2) Population control were practiced in order to help economic development.

• (3) Submission to government authority seems to have brought rapid population transition and surprising economic growth in these three countries.
Main characteristics of population aging in Japan

1. Japan is and will be the ‘oldest’ country in the world.
2. Japan’s fertility rate is one of the lowest in the world.
3. Japan is and will be one of the oldest countries in the world until 2050.
4. Working-age population will shrink significantly in the coming half a century.
5. There will be sharp increase in the number of the impaired and frail elderly.
Main characteristics of population aging in Korea

• 1. Korea’s fertility rate is one of the lowest in the world. (TFR= 1.08)
• 2. Speed of the population aging in Korea is the fastest in the world.
• 3. Working-age population will shrink significantly in the coming half a century.
• 4. There will be sharp increase in the number of the impaired and frail elderly.
• 5. There is a significant difference of the living arrangements of the elderly between urban and rural areas.
• 1. Rapid population aging
• 2. Population aging in the less developed stage
• 3. Regional disparity of population aging (urban-rural differentials)
• 4. The large number of the elderly

Characteristics of population aging in China (Hong Guodong)
Conclusion
In contrast to the industrialized nations of the Western countries, the three East Asian countries have experienced a rapid economic growth and a rapid population aging at about the same time.

In the Western countries, industrialization has brought about the urbanization and the increased proportion of the nuclear family. The economic development has contributed to the standard of living and improvement in nutrition, personal hygiene and medical technology, and thus increased the life span of the elderly.
Statistics on the economic situation indicate that Japan has the most advanced economic development, followed by Korea and then by China.

Japan is supposed to be relatively the most prosperous while China is the most disadvantaged.

However, the pattern of the current economic growth shows the opposite trend, that is, China shows the most rapid growth while Japan shows the most retarded growth.
In terms of the population aging, Japan has the most advanced stage, not only in the aging process but also in adopting the welfare policies for the elderly.

It seems to be a good time for Korea and China to make policies for the elderly while their economies are continuously growing and population aging has not progressed to the highest stage.