Depopulation and Aging Society Crisis: Redefining Japanese Identity

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Abstract

The aging population in Japan is increasing every year as the youth is declining. While most researchers and economists are trying to solve this problem by proposing immigration or incentives for increase of birthrate, this research proposes a different approach. The Japanese experience a luxurious economy during the 1970s and were proud of their accomplishments. Unfortunately the “bubble burst” and the economy crashed in the 1990s. Still today, they are recovering from the damage and foreseeing a growth in their future. The citizens who witnessed the crash are also the survivors of World War II. Post WWII gave a reason for the Japanese to unify and rebuild their nation. Their patriotism role in post war shaped the meaning of Japanese identity. Japan is known for their homogenous culture and low rate of immigration but can they continue to do that? How will the Japanese sustain homogenous culture and if not, how will it change their Japanese identity? What are the benefits for Japan? To solve these issues this research will go through the issues linking to the aging society and causes for population decline, and the root of the problem. The elderly Japanese have their own meaning of Japanese identity due to post WWII and economic crashes. The current issues in Japan will help the youth redefine a new meaning of Japanese Identity.

Methods

For this research, I gathered sources from online databases and books from the library. Also, I looked into what other scholars’ insights were on the demographic issues. In GIS class, I used the tools and skills I gain to make a map to show the changing demographics in Japan. The data are from the Japanese Statistical Agency census. This research covers many of the current issues and rising issues Japan. I researched on Japan’s related historical events such as, Tokugawa Era, Meiji Restoration, World War II, post WWII development, and the “Bubble Burst”. These events created issues that has never happen before in this 21st century. I researched the current issues and found the reason of the cause by relating to the historical events. Using peers from Japan, they helped me understand the pop culture of the youth and their personal views on the Aging society and declining birthrates. I looked into the current popular hits on Oricon Music chart to see what is mainstream playing and what are the common themes.

Solution & Conclusion

The youth in Japan can rediscover their identity by unifying and more importantly redefine their nationality because there will be Brazilians, Filipinos, Chinese, and Koreans who will continue to reside in Japan. They should embrace the aging society because this can potentially open new opportunities for the Japanese to improve their youth involvement, culture, government, and more. Currently, the youth are already taking initiative actions to support movement. The Hafu Project explores the identity challenges of half Japanese and voice out native Japanese’s opinions in biracial identities. In the streets of Tokyo, The Hafu Project learned that people do consider half Japanese individuals and how they respond to their identity. The youth are more acceptable to merge in the new global society and explore different nationalities.

Elderly’s view Xenophobia: The fear of Gaijin (Foreigner) influences.

Youth’s view The Hafu Project: A project made to show the voices of half Japanese individuals and how they respond to their identity. The youth are more acceptable to merge in the new global society and explore different nationalities.

Employment in Japan: City employment vs Rural

Job hunting process: The clones in process. Job seekers must have black hair, speak formal language (keijō), wear black attire, apply no or light make up, and

Salaryman: Businessmen in the city who always work overtime with no overtime pay

Youth’s view The Hafu Project: A project made to show the voices of half Japanese individuals and how they respond to their identity. The youth are more acceptable to merge in the new global society and explore different nationalities.

Kodokushi: a term for people who dies alone. This is an issue for lonely elderly who does not go into nursery care.

Hikikomori: a term for people who isolate from society for a period of time

Increasing population of 15-34 men who are categorized as Not in Employment, Education, and Training NEET

Population and care

- Birthrate decline: 2005 birthrate in Japan was 1.25 and this year in 2013 it is 1.41. Comparing to the US’s birthrate at 1.88 and considering this is low for the US too.
- Workforce or retirement? The retirement age is 65 but most do not actually retire until 70 years old
- Pension programs: who’s going to pay for it? New retirement age is 65 to strengthen the workforce. ½ of Today’s population is 65+ years and by 2025 it will be 1/3.
- Japan-Filipines Economic Partnership Agreement Act in 2008: Nurses from the Philippines were selected to work at Nursery homes in Japan but must pass a Japanese nursery credentials to renew their visa and work. At a rate of 90% failing, due to language barriers, the Filipino are sent back home for not meeting the requirements in Japanese. The government is aware about this issue and are trying to increase the passing rate by substituting the Japanese medical terms to English since it is the second language in the Philippines.
- Brazilian Japanese send back; Japanese Government would pay 3,000USD per jobless and 2,000 per family member Brazilian Japanese to return to Brazil and never to comeback to live in Japan even if the economy stables.

Economics

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- Salaryman: Businessmen in the city who always work overtime with no overtime pay

Figure 1

1940 Age Population

Population

0 500,000 1,000,000 1,500,000 2,000,000

Figure 2

2010 Age Population

Population

0 500,000 1,000,000 1,500,000 2,000,000

Figure 3

The percentage of the population aged 65 and over increased from 20.2% to 23.0%. The population under 15 years old was 16,803 thousand (13.2% of the total population) Those aged 15 to 64 totaled 81,032 thousand (63.8% and those aged 65 years old and over numbered 29,246 thousand (23.0%). The population aged under 15 years old decreased by 718 thousand (4.1%) from 2005, and those aged 15 to 64 years old decreased by 3,061 thousand (3.6%). The population aged 65 years old and over increased by 3,574 thousand (13.9%).

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