

## Empowering the Silver Generation: Engaging the Power of Experience for Inclusion

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### Abstract

*The growing population of silver generation presents both challenges and opportunities for contemporary societies. As the global population continues to age rapidly due to longer life expectancy and advancements in healthcare, older adults—respectfully referred to as the Silver Generation—emerge as a significant yet underutilized resource in society. This demographic shift brings with it both challenges and opportunities, requiring thoughtful strategies that acknowledge and harness the value of older individuals. This research article explores the concept of empowering the Silver Generation by drawing upon their life experiences and capabilities. It provides a thorough analysis of how older adults can be more meaningfully included in social participation. Through a detailed review of existing studies, theories, and practical examples, the article examines the benefits of older adults' involvement in employment, lifelong learning, healthcare, volunteerism, and intergenerational programs. The study also discusses the positive outcomes that empowerment can bring at the individual and societal levels, such as improved well-being, stronger community ties, and inclusive development. Finally, it offers policy recommendations and actionable strategies for governments, communities, and organizations. Embracing the knowledge and experience of older adults can lead to more equitable and inclusive societies that benefit all generations.*

**Keywords:** silver generation, empowerment, silver tsunami, social inclusion

### Introduction

Elderly individuals, often referred to as senior citizens, are generally those who have reached a certain age as defined by national legislation and are typically retired from employment. They are also considered a non-working group, no longer engaged in active income generation. The age threshold for defining the elderly differs across countries, making it both subjective and relative (Dhakal, 2022). The silver generation, identified as senior citizens, is commonly recognized from the age of 60 as the commencement year (Government of Nepal, 2006). The world is witnessing an unprecedented rise in the aging population, with the number of people aged 60 and above growing rapidly (United Nations Population Fund & HelpAge International, 2012). This demographic change invites a rethinking of how societies perceive and interact with older adults. The age category attributed to the Silver Generation differs across studies. For example, some scholars define it as individuals over 50 years of age (Laskowska & Laskowski, 2022) whereas others consider it as beginning from 60 years

and above (Lange & Velamuri, 2014), and next one says that older adult or senior citizens or silver generation (Carvalho et al., 2019) represent the same age group. Whatever its age category, the generation holds a rich mix of knowledge, skills, and life experiences that can benefit society if properly recognized and utilized. Empowering older individuals is essential to developing active aging and building stronger intergenerational relationships (World Health Organization, 2002). Although aging is often associated with negative stereotypes, increasing evidence in scholarly literature and the perspectives of older adults themselves highlight that old age does not automatically equate to senility, fatigue, illness, or frailty. Intergenerational interactions have been shown to improve older adults' mental health, strengthen social ties, and create opportunities for mutual learning and support. Active involvement in community life further enhances empowerment, as it allows older people to participate in decisions that affect their daily lives. When older adults are engaged in social organizations, policy dialogues, or local initiatives, their voices are heard, and their contributions acknowledged.

Population aging is the pre-eminent demographic challenge of the twenty-first century, a global, irreversible and unprecedented trend. Lifelong learning serves as another effective pathway to empowerment, enabling older adults to continually adapt, remain socially engaged, and strengthen their sense of self-worth in later life. (Tragaki, 2024). Tailored educational programs for older adults have proven beneficial in supporting personal development, promoting intellectual engagement, and creating opportunities for social interaction. These opportunities contribute to broadening knowledge among older adults and simultaneously revitalize their sense of meaning. Similarly, volunteer activities provide a platform for older adults to apply their skills, connect with others, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Intergenerational volunteer programs, in particular, have been successful in building bridges between generations and promoting mutual respect.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Despite these promising strategies, research on the comprehensive empowerment of silver generation remains limited. There is a need to explore and evaluate interventions that address multiple aspects of empowerment. This article focuses on identifying the factors that contribute to empowering the silver generation and proposes evidence-based strategies to create more age-inclusive environments. By highlighting the importance of older adults' roles in modern society, this study aims to support the development of communities that are enriched by the experience and wisdom of the Silver Generation. Population aging is not only a demographic reality but also a chance to reshape society by recognizing the value of older adults. The Silver Generation represents a growing segment of the population that possesses diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives. Rather than viewing this group as dependent or passive, it is important to see them as active contributors to social, economic, and cultural life. As a result, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers are increasingly focusing on ways to empower older adults in areas such as financial stability, community involvement, and personal autonomy. This research article examines these dimensions in depth, with a focus on

how different factors—like economic independence, social inclusion, and active decision-making—can improve older adults' quality of life. Furthermore, the article considers how overlapping factors such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability affect older people's access to empowerment opportunities. Using real-world examples, the article provides a comprehensive overview of both the challenges and opportunities involved in empowering the silver generation. The goal is to encourage inclusive practices and policies that help create a society where an individual in silver generation is respected, engaged, and valued.

### **Methods and Materials**

The present study employs a qualitative research design grounded in secondary data analysis. A systematic review of scholarly articles, academic books, policy documents, and international reports was undertaken to capture the breadth of knowledge on the silver generation and its socio-economic, cultural, and decision-making dimensions. The selection of literature followed a purposive sampling strategy, prioritizing peer-reviewed publications and authoritative sources that directly engage with themes of aging, empowerment, and generational roles. Each text was subjected to thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns, theoretical perspectives, and contextual variations, with particular attention given to studies reflecting both global insights and the Nepali context. The synthesized findings provide a comprehensive analytical foundation for drawing evidence-based conclusions on the evolving position of older adults in contemporary society.

### **Results and Discussion**

Healthy aging from the definition "The process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older ages" (World Health Organization, 2015) it is clear that enhancing health and encouraging active lifestyles among older adults are fundamental to advancing the silver economy. Creating an age-inclusive society that values and supports the goals of senior citizens is essential. A key strategy to harness the potential of the silver economy involves facilitating the exchange of skills and knowledge between older and younger generations in the workforce. Income in real sense is the maximum amount of money, which the senior individual can spend, represents old aged economic potential and that would be helpful to be able to spend the same amount in each succeeding time. A person at 60 years in the beginning of decade of healthy aging (2021-2030) could expect to live, on average, additional 22 years (World Health Organization, 2020). According to the UN Decade on Healthy Ageing report, the availability of social and economic resources and opportunities throughout one's life influences the ability to adopt healthy behaviors, remain engaged, and obtain necessary support.

The vision for the decade of healthy aging aims to create a world where everyone can live longer and healthier lives. This vision aligns with the three main priorities of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing—development, health, and creating an enabling environment (United Nations, 2002) and reflects the dream of the Sustainable

Development Goals to leave no one behind. The vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to “leave no one behind” underscores a commitment to inclusive and equitable development that prioritizes the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. It reflects a human rights–based approach, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or location, have equal opportunities to benefit from progress. By pledging to reach the furthest behind first, the SDGs emphasize the reduction of inequalities and the creation of sustainable pathways that enable every individual to live with dignity and participate meaningfully in development (UNDP, 2018). Aging well in the workplace refers to remaining active and productive for a longer period, while aging well in the community emphasizes staying socially engaged and minimizing isolation. Similarly, aging well at home means enjoying better health and quality of daily life, supported by independence, autonomy, and dignity (Carvalho et al., 2019).

The results of the study confirm that empowering older adults involves addressing multiple interrelated domains. Economic empowerment is a cornerstone, as financial stability helps older adults live independently and participate more fully in society. This includes access to pensions, job opportunities, entrepreneurship programs, and financial services. Research supports that when older adults have control over their finances; their confidence and well-being improve significantly. Alongside financial security, social engagement is vital. Those who participate in community groups, cultural activities, or volunteer programs report greater satisfaction and mental health. Lifelong learning programs are especially valuable in this regard, offering opportunities for personal development and social interaction. Psychological empowerment is generally explained through three dimensions: intrapersonal, interpersonal (interactive), and behavioral. The intrapersonal aspect concerns individuals’ self-perceptions, the interpersonal dimension reflects critical awareness of prevailing social norms, and the behavioral component emphasizes active participation within society (De Witte & Van Regenmortel, 2019). Silver Empowerment seeks to create conditions in which older adults can age with dignity and purpose, remaining actively connected to a society that encourages their participation. Historically, many initiatives have been done for older adults rather than by or with them. Consequently, the concept underscores the importance of leveraging the strengths, skills, and capacities of older individuals, while still acknowledging and addressing their vulnerabilities (De Witte & Van Regenmortel, 2023).

### **Demographic Shift**

Extended life expectancy is a blessing for individuals; however, it also presents challenges. As longevity increases, large cohorts of the silver generation move to the upper tiers of the population pyramid, while younger cohorts diminish, placing increasing pressure on economic and social systems. The numerical explosion of older people is often described as a ‘silver tsunami’, an alarming term that warns of the massive destruction that is about to hit many nations (Tragaki, 2024). In medical terminology, dependency depends on one's needs for help with the activities of daily living (ADL), while in economics terminology, dependency relates to age brackets. A

study shows the percentage of those who are medically dependent rises sharply as the age bracket increases from young/old (65-75) to old (75-85) to old/old (85 plus) (Goodhart & Pradhan, 2020). At present, global priorities have moved from addressing food scarcity to tackling food insecurity, and from focusing on population growth rates to confronting demographic and economic disparities that drive large-scale migration. The focus has shifted from managing the challenges of a large young population cohort to addressing the profound transformations of population ageing, which is redefining the economic and social landscape (Bongaarts, 2023).

Participation of the silver generation in decision-making helps them feel valued, supporting autonomy that strengthens self-esteem and overall quality of life. Intergenerational engagement—through mentoring, collaborative projects, or co-living arrangements—fosters mutual understanding and mitigates age-related stereotypes. Yet, numerous barriers, including limited access to resources and mobility challenges, often restrict full societal participation, particularly for older adults from marginalized groups. Addressing these issues demands an intersectional approach that considers the diverse experiences of older individuals across gender, ethnicity, location, and abilities.

### **Nepalese context**

In Nepal, the Silver Generation represents a rapidly growing segment of the population, particularly as life expectancy rises and fertility rates decline. Despite their wealth of experience, knowledge, and skills, older adults in Nepal often face social and economic marginalization, limited decision-making opportunities, and restricted access to healthcare and lifelong learning programs. Traditional family structures are changing, and migration has left many older individuals with reduced familial support, further highlighting the need for empowerment initiatives. Recognizing and engaging the capacities of Nepalese older adults can foster active aging, strengthen intergenerational ties, and enable them to contribute meaningfully to community development, policymaking, and social innovation. Policies and programs tailored to the Nepali context—such as community-based volunteer projects, financial inclusion measures, and culturally sensitive education and health interventions—can transform older adults from passive recipients of support into active participants in shaping society.

Although demographic change has become a subject of growing concern, current discussions often remain fragmented and lack depth. Public understanding of the implications of population aging is limited, and policymakers frequently overlook structural inequalities by relying on generalized, “one-size-fits-all” solutions. (Tragaki, 2024). The elderly population is a heterogeneous group and social exclusion is a complex, multi-dimensional concept, one-size-fits-all measures do not work (De Witte & Van Regenmortel, 2019). Such approaches are inadequate because populations are highly diverse, varying in age composition, gender balance, education, migration patterns, and cultural context. A demographic trend that produces certain outcomes in one society may lead to very different consequences elsewhere. Furthermore, disparities in the quality and availability of data make standardized methods of analysis

problematic. Addressing these challenges requires policies that not only recognize demographic heterogeneity but also value the lived experiences, knowledge, and capacities of older generations, thereby transforming them from passive recipients of care into active contributors to social and economic development.

Silver empowerment focuses on the abilities and social networks of silver generation, determining to build an inclusive, age-friendly society that enables everyone to grow older with dignity and meaningful engagement. The study recommends that policymakers adopt inclusive approaches, such as flexible work options, accessible public services, and platforms that elevate older people's voices. It also highlights the importance of community-driven, culturally sensitive interventions supported by strong evaluation frameworks to assess their impact. Furthermore, collaboration across sectors—including researchers, community organizations, and government bodies—is crucial for fostering meaningful and sustainable change.

### Conclusion

Population aging, occurring more rapidly than in previous times, is primarily driven by declining birth rates and longer life expectancy. Empowering the Silver Generation is essential for fostering inclusive, respectful, and sustainable communities. This study shows that economic empowerment, social participation, and decision-making autonomy are key components in enhancing older adults' well-being and societal involvement. While some progress has been made, significant gaps remain, especially for older adults facing social and economic disadvantages. Policies must focus on creating age-friendly environments that offer opportunities for financial independence, meaningful social engagement, and personal agency. Future research should continue to evaluate the success of various empowerment strategies in different cultural and social contexts, ensuring that the diverse needs of older adults are addressed. Ultimately, recognizing and engaging the experience and knowledge of the Silver Generation is not only a matter of social justice but also a way to enrich communities and ensure a better future for all generations.

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