

ELDERLY'S CONTRIBUTION IN EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

A Study of Mandandeupur Municipality, Kavreplanchowk

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Abstract

The study primarily looks upon the areas of skills and expertise of elderly and their ability to generate employment based on their own experiences. The study was done in Mandandeupur Municipality of Kavre, where 106 elderly were interviewed regarding their knowledge and experiences, skill transfer and its benefits for younger generation. The study also examines the current status of elderly in the society as well as their economic contribution in their families. Conducted in a rural location, almost all of the elderly were involved in agriculture as their main profession and had started their line of profession without any prior trainings of any sort. This further shows the need of initiating programs via government to link older people with younger generation for skill transfer and innovations in traditional farming system as they still see the relevancy of their profession in the coming ten years. Although the younger generation are shifting towards modernization and glamorous professions rather than agriculture, older people still believe that embracing their line of work can improve younger generations' social status and generate adequate revenue. It is evident that their traditional skills are currently capable of contributing to their economy so combining that with modern techniques can contribute to better income and employment generation as well.

Key words: Elderly, employment generation, Youths, expertise, Intergenerational skill transfer

Introduction

Population of elderly has been growing rapidly all around the world in the past few years, which has led to a change in structure of the family and society as a whole. Most of the developed countries have already experienced results of rapid growth of elderly population during mid-20th century, whereas developing countries have started to face consequences only since early 21st century. Elderly population accounts for 13% (approx.) of the world population today, while it is anticipated to reach more than two billion by the end of 2050, according to the United Nations census report 2014. Nepal is also witnessing rapid growth of its elderly population compared to other age groups. According to the census of 2068 B.S., 8.1% of the total population belongs to senior citizen category while it was only 6.41% a decade ago.

In world's labour market, 25 % of the labour force will be 55 and more and almost 17% will be 65 and older by 2020 (Toossi, 2012). To better deal with the emerging issue, many developed nations have increased retirement age to keep their citizens active and contribute to the economy of their respective countries. However, in the context of Nepal, no such policies are in place; people beyond retirement age or during old age are not legally allowed to remain active. Outdated stereotype, unconscious biasness and age discrimination are preventing capable senior citizens to go through retain, re-train and recruit process (Poudel, & Devkota, 2019).

To deal better with the emerging issue, many developed nations have increased retirement age to keep their citizens active and contribute to their national economy. However, no such policies are in place in Nepal; people beyond retirement age or during old age are not legally allowed to remain active. Outdated stereotype, unconscious biasness and age discrimination are preventing capable elderly to go through retain, re-train and recruit process.

Senior citizens are undoubtedly a major warehouse of skill and knowledge. While development is possible with innovation; innovation relies on past experience and knowledge. By keeping senior citizens active during older ages their knowledge and experiences can be transferred to younger age groups, who can further build on to innovate new ideas. In contrast, there is no platform for intergenerational skill transfer, at least here in Nepal. There is also a lack in policy and related programs to engage elderly in employment activities after their retirement.

Active Ageing has started to become a worldwide practice in past few years and Nepal needs to analyze the consequences of not keeping up with the current ageing trend of the world. Rapid growth of elderly population along with decrease in annual population growth pose several challenges and glimmer concern about the future labor market and economy of the country. The need for policy adaptation will become increasingly more important in the face of declining population growth rate, shrinking labor force, shift in priority area for private investment and the rising costs of pension and health care systems. This calls for developing or adaptation of policies/programmes to sustain elderly in the labor market while making best use of their life-long experience and knowledge (Gautam&Poudel, 2013).

Methodology

This article is built of the findings of the Mandandepur municipality of the research, Contribution of Senior Citizens in Employment Generation, conducted with support from the University Grant Commission, Nepal (UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06) in Sindupalchowk, Kavrepalanchowk and Kathmandu districts. However, data gathered from Mandandepur Municipality, Kabhrepanchowk district have only been analyzed to develop

this particular article. Exploratory in nature, the research has tried to explore ways for involving senior citizens into local economy, while creating employment opportunities for the younger generation. This study relies on data gathered through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and meetings, and literature review.

Entire households in the municipality with senior citizens, involved in local economy, were considered universe of the study. Of the total population, 106 elderly people meeting the selection criteria were interviewed using purposive sampling technique. Senior citizens engaged in agriculture, business, cooperative, education sector and/or any type of microenterprise were the primary respondents.

Combination of both quantitative as well as qualitative data collection methods were adopted to explore how senior citizens can be involved in local economy as well as how their experiences and/or knowledge can help generate job opportunities for younger generation. While quantitative data were gathered through interview schedule, qualitative data were acquired from FGD, KII and meetings. Respondents from different castes and occupations were selected to maintain heterogeneity in samples. Quantitative tool was pretested prior to actual data collection, and data gathered from the field were tabulated and analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

Objectives

The objectives of this research can be stated broadly as:

- To analyze the skills and expertise of elderly regarding income generation in Mandandeupur Municipality, Kavreplanchowk district.
- To explore areas where elderly can contribute to generate employment opportunities.
- To describe expectations of elderly from younger generation and vice versa regarding employment opportunities.

Discussion

Contribution of Elderly

The findings of the survey revealed that most elderly in Mandandeupur spent their working hours in agricultural sector. The survey tried to find out if the elderly are still contributing to the society and family via any type of work/profession. Nearly 2 percent of respondents are not involved in any types of work while 98.11 percent respondents are still working in different sector. The major reasons for not working among those very few respondents were due to health issues and losing interest in the job due to old age.

Types of work and role of elderly

Among the respondents 83 percent replied that they have been involved in the same profession they used to do.

Table 1: Professions and roles of respondents

S.N	Work	Number	Percentage
1	Traditional	88	83.0
2	Business	3	2.8
3	Carpentry	1	0.9
4	Hotel	1	0.9
5	Others	13	12.3
	Total	106	100
S.N	Roles	Number	Percentage
1	Technical advice	8	7.5
2	Physical work	38	35.8
3	Both	59	55.7
4	Others	1	0.9
	Total	106	100

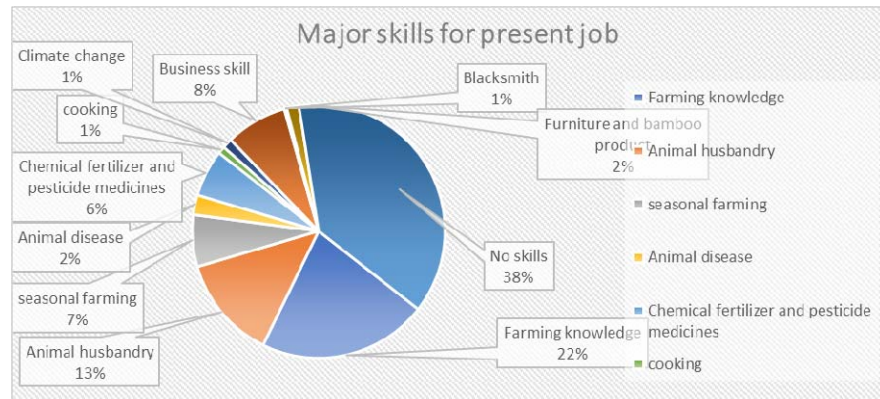
Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

Other, 12.3 percent of the respondents were involved in other sectors as well. Also, 2.8 percent were involved in business and the rest were into hotel and furniture with 0.9 percent each respectively. The major roles they play in their line of profession were both physical work and technical advice totaling to 55.7 percent. Similarly, over 35 percent were involved in only physical work and 7.5 percent were inclined towards providing technical advice in their profession. Other roles include coordination and management which accounts for 0.9 percent.

Major Skills of Elderly in present work

The major skills acquired for the present job (Figure 1) comprises of farming knowledge, seasonal farming, animal husbandry, animal disease, chemical fertilizer and pesticide medicine, cooking, climate change, business skills, blacksmith, furniture and bamboo. The majority, 38.05 percent of older persons possessed no skills at all. On the other hand, 22 percent had farming knowledge, 13 percent had knowledge about animal husbandry, 7 percent were aware of seasonal farming, 6 percent had knowledge about chemical fertilizer and pesticides medicines, 2 percent were aware of animal disease, 1 percent had cooking knowledge, 1 percent knew about climate change, 8 percent possessed business skills, 1 percent had knowledge about blacksmith and 2 percent had knowledge of making furniture and bamboo products.

Figure 1: Response about work and employment of senior citizens'



With the available skills and expertise of elderly, the research tried to find out the perception of elderly on being able to generate employment based on their past experiences (Figure 2). With the current prospective of jobs as well as employment creation, 66 percent of the total respondents said that their profession can generate employment for others while the rest 34 percent did not think so.

Figure 2: Perception of respondents on possibility of employment generation through their work



Support of family members

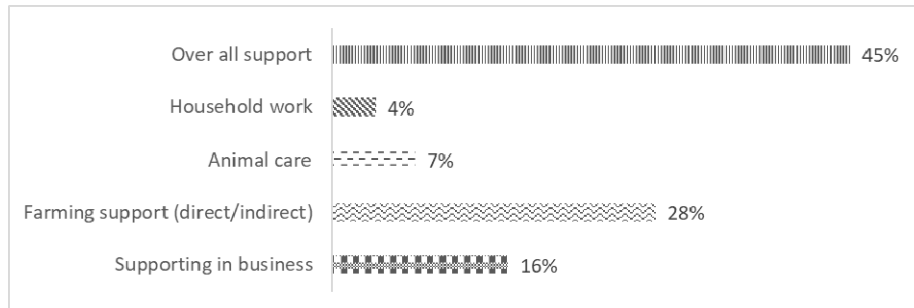
Table 2: Supporting family members in respondents' profession

S.N	Family Members	Number	Percentage
1	Husband/wife	49	46.2
2	Son/daughter in law	45	42.5
3	Daughter/son in law	0	0.0
4	Son/daughter	0	0.0
5	Grand children's	9	8.5
6	Others	3	2.8
	Total	106	100

Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

While most of the elderly have not employed staffs in their current line of work, most of them are assisted by their own family members, which in a way, can be considered as employment generation for them. Among the family members who assist them in work, 46.2 percent were husband/wife, 42.5 percent were son/daughter in law, 8.5 percent were grandchildren and the rest 2.8 percent were other family members. Among them, the major aspects or arenas of assistance (Figure 3) comprises of farming support(direct or indirect) with 28 percent, supporting in business with 16 percent, animal care with 7 percent and household work with 4 percent. 45 percent of them replied that they get overall support from the family members.

Figure 3: Areas of support from family members



Elderly’s views about improvement of current profession

Talking about the major recommendations to ignite improvements in their current profession, majority (28.3 percent) responded with innovation and better equipment facilities in their line of work, as the technology has improved significantly since their days, they think that it could improve their work and also generate better output. Other recommendations included using high level of improved breeds in animal husbandry with 16 percent, enhanced fertility of soil with 9.4 percent, better investment in livestock/agriculture with 5.7 percent and training and irrigation facility with 16.9 percent out of the total population. On the other hand, 11.33 percent did not have any recommendations at all.

Table 3: Major recommendations for improvements in current profession

S.N	Recommendations for improvement	No.	Percentage
1	Trainings and irrigation facility	18	16.9
2	Investment in agriculture/livestock sector	6	5.7
3	Innovation and equipment	30	28.3
4	Fertile soil	10	9.4
5	High level of improved breeds	17	16.0

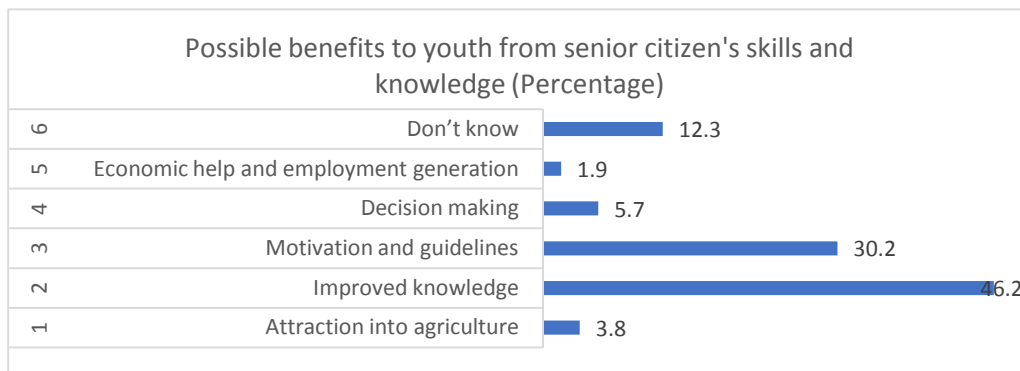
6	Agriculture as a primary profession	4	3.8
7	Reducing the gap between market and village	4	3.78
8	Improved shed and shelter	5	4.72
9	Don't know	12	11.33
Total		106	100

Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

Benefit for younger generation through knowledge transfer

Among all respondents, 46.2 percent think their knowledge helps younger generation with improved knowledge on the given area of work. According to 30.2 percent respondents, youth get motivation and guidelines from elderly for their path of life whereas 5.7 percent think sharing experiences can be beneficial for youth to take decisions. While all of these benefits can lead to better living conditions of the youth, it is for sure that this can be beneficial in generating more employment opportunities for the younger generation. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Possible benefits to youth from senior citizen's skills and knowledge



The research further looked into ways of transferring knowledge and skill from senior citizen to new generation and the response shows that skill oriented training, loan to start a business, developing agricultural business, sharing experiences, motivation and guidelines can help transfer knowledge of the elderly to younger generation. The majority, 55.66 percent of respondents said they don't know at all. On the other hand, 1.57 percent replied that it's difficult to understand each other's generations because of the way of thinking. 25.47 percent of them think they can transfer their knowledge and skills through sharing experiences.

Expectation of elderly from younger generation

While embracing the work of elderly by youth seems great, there are some expectation that the elderly have from the younger generation who want to embrace the line of work. Of the

total respondents 43.39 percent said that they expect the younger generation to continue agriculture, 14.15 percent want them to have financial stability, 10.37 percent think that younger ones should think about village development, 6.60 percent consider they should be able to generate additional employment opportunities, 6.60 percent think that simulation of experience can be beneficial and 4.71 percent said their work should be sustainable. On the other hand 14.15 percent respondents had no expectations at all.

Table 4: Perception on expectations from new generation involved in similar business

S.N	Expectations	Number	Percentage
1	Continuity on Agriculture	46	43.40
2	Village Development	11	10.38
3	Simulation of experience	7	6.61
4	Sustainable work	5	4.717
5	Financial stability	15	14.16
6	Employment generation	7	6.61
7	Don't know	15	14.16
Total		106	100

Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

On the other hand respondents were asked if their fundamental needs get fulfilled from their income, to which, 91.50 percent replied with yes and 8.49 percent said their income is insufficient for their living. Similarly, they were asked if they take household responsibilities at this age or not and it was seen that 95% take responsibilities of their family.

Table 5: Responsibilities of respondents in their family

S.N	Areas of responsibilities (Multiple Choice)	Number	Percentage
1	Overall household expenses	123	40.6
2	Festival expenses	33	10.9
3	Personal expenses	23	7.6
4	Overall expenses	9	3.0
5	Medical treatment	85	28.1
6	Salary for workers	3	1.0
7	Education	27	8.9
Total		303	100

Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

Among 95 percent people who take responsibilities of their families, a majority (41%) take care of overall household expenses, 28 percent look after medical expenses, 11 percent with

festival expenses, 9 percent with education, 7 percent with personal expenses, 3 percent with overall responsibility and 1 percent of them who have employees paid salary.

Table 6: Status of respondents' support in household activities

S.N	Support family for Household activities	Number	Percentage
1	Still supporting	97	91.5
2	Not supporting	9	8.5
	Total	106	100

Source: Report; UGC Award No. FRG-73/74-H&S-06

Among 106 respondents, 91.50 percent support their families either financially or for household activities which show that older citizen can still work and support their families at this age. Besides generating income for the family, most of them help their families through unpaid work like taking care of grandchildren, cooking, looking after livelihoods etc.

Conclusion

Since the study was conducted in a rural setting, it is not a surprise that a majority of elderly were involved in agriculture in their past years whereas some being involved in other businesses and government jobs. Interestingly, almost all the elderly still work in their later years, meaning they are still contributing to the economy of their families and creating jobs for either their own younger ones or others; however, they have not employed extra hands to help in their profession, mainly because of small scale of their current business. Provided the proper use of elderly's knowledge on traditional farming and agriculture techniques, it is possible to generate employment opportunities for younger generations, according to the respondents but since they are running only small scaled farming; occasional help from other family members like husband, wife or children is currently enough which has also contributed in skill transfer to younger generation which in turn has generated employment opportunities for some of the younger population. While almost all the elderly had stated their line of profession without any prior trainings of any sort, they feel the need of further knowledge sharing and information on modern ways of farming and new equipment. This plays a vital role in bridging the gap between younger and older generations, as both of them can work hand in hand to improve the current situation of farming and yield better employment opportunities and income through advancement in technology. This further shows the need of initiating programs via government to link older people with younger generation for skill transfer and innovations in traditional farming system as they still see the relevancy of their profession in the coming ten years.

Another interesting finding is that almost all of the respondents are making a sufficient living (basic) through their current income generating activities and think this could be beneficial to younger generations too if the knowledge and skills of older people is

transferred to them via experience sharing, motivation/guidance and skill oriented trainings. However, the respondents also feel that there is a need to aware and empower youth towards appreciating agriculture and creating opportunities for them to indulge in farming. Although the younger generation are shifting towards modernization and glamorous professions rather than agriculture, older people still believe that embracing their line of work can improve younger generations' social status and generate adequate revenue. It would be unfair to not talk about the health aspects of older people as ageing process declines health condition of anyone. But due to the advancement in health sector, tackling diseases has been much easier than before. Most of the respondents feel they have better physical strength than that of the same aged people in their community, hence the continuity of their profession. However, their ability to do daily household work and reading and writing ability has declined over the years. Most of them credit their profession for their better health as farming is usually associated with physical work where one gets plenty of exercise which can be beneficial for future years. Apart from that, better knowledge and availability of health facilities is also a reason for their better health.

Older people in general have a plethora of experience and when combined with their professional skills and knowledge, it would not be wrong to say that they have more to offer to the younger generation if provided with proper skill transfer platforms. It is evident that their traditional skills are currently capable of contributing to their economy so combining that with modern techniques can contribute to better income and employment generation as well. For this, it is necessary that the government as well as non-government organizations include programs related to elderly, especially knowledge and skill transfer, to bridge the existing gap between older and younger population and to create an environment where both generations can work hand in hand for a better society and employment opportunities for each other.

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