

# Research on the Willingness of Silver-haired Teachers to Participate in Society from the Perspective of Active Aging

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**Abstract:** As social aging intensifies, the social participation of the silver-haired group has emerged as a crucial topic. This paper zeroes in on investigating the willingness and motivation of silver-haired teachers to engage in social activities, with the aim of activating the intellectual capital of this group and facilitating the diverse development of society. Employing research methods such as questionnaires and in-depth interviews, the study reveals that silver-haired teachers exhibit a relatively high willingness to participate in society. The support of family members for their participation in social activities has an impact on their willingness. However, the social participation support system does not adequately meet the participation needs of silver-haired teachers. Measures should be taken to enhance the awareness of silver-haired teachers' social participation, expand participation channels, strengthen the talent team of silver-haired teachers, create an atmosphere that promotes the social participation willingness of retired teachers, and build a support system. This will promote the social participation of silver-haired teachers, contribute to their being productive in old age, and drive the high-quality development of the population.

**Keywords:** Active Aging; Silver-haired Teachers; Social Participation; Participation Willingness; Being Productive in Old Age

## 1. Introduction

According to estimates, around 2035, the elderly population aged 60 and above will exceed 400 million, accounting for more than 30% of the total population [1]. In 2050, it will reach a peak of 500 million and enter a super-aged society. This indicates that the aging of the population is developing rapidly and the degree is deepening day by day. With the

intensifying trend of population aging in China, the group of silver-haired teachers is growing and they possess rich educational experience and professional knowledge. However, the existing teacher retirement age policy still follows the logic of traditional retirement systems and personnel management systems. The concept of "active aging" holds that low-age elderly people aged 60-69 have rich life accumulations and social experience, and their abilities to analyze and handle problems are in a good state. The data in the "China Education Statistical Yearbook" and the research results of researchers show that China's retired teacher human resources are abundant in quantity and excellent in quality, with obvious advantages and can be reused.

On July 14, 2023, ten departments including the Ministry of Education jointly issued the "National Silver-haired Teachers Action Plan" (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan"). This Plan constructs a platform for being productive in old age at the national level, taps into the resource advantages of retired teachers, and plays their beneficial supplementary and exemplary leading roles. The social capital and cultural capital held by silver-haired teachers determine that they possess high human capital value. To a large extent, this can inspire them to continue participating in society and exert their value. Guiding silver-haired teachers to actively engage in social activities can release their development potential to the greatest extent. The "Plan" requires departments such as education and human resources and social security at all levels to leverage their respective advantages and actively mobilize and support eligible outstanding retirees in their respective fields to participate in the national silver-haired teacher action plan [2].

## 2. Purpose

In the context of an aging society, the social participation of silver-haired teachers is not only a manifestation of the continuation of

personal value but also a valuable resource for the sustainable development of society. They possess rich educational experience and professional knowledge and are an important force in building a learning society and promoting community development. However, the current status and potential of the social participation of silver-haired teachers still need to be explored in depth. Therefore, understanding the social participation willingness of silver-haired teachers in Guangdong Province can guide silver-haired teachers to actively participate in social activities, give full play to the social value of silver-haired teachers, and thus release development potential to the greatest extent. This study aims to explore the social participation willingness of silver-haired teachers in Guangdong Province and the factors that affect their social participation, so as to promote the active participation of silver-haired teachers in building a harmonious society.

Social participation refers to continuing to integrate into society and fully and effectively participate in social, economic, cultural, and social activities. It mainly includes productive social participation and collective social participation. Among them, productive social participation refers to providing goods, services, and other benefits for others, and collective social participation refers to participating in social groups or organizations [3]. From the perspective of active aging, the elderly stage of an individual should not be a consumption and passing of life. Instead, through the full utilization of limited life time, the individual's human capital value and other social values should be maximized, and the enhancement of individual life value should be combined with social development [4]. Silver-haired teachers belong to knowledge-based retirees. The development at the declining stage of their career has the ontological elements of realizing their social value and continuous redevelopment, and they can continue to create value and wealth for society [5]. In China, retired teachers, especially retired college teachers, are abundant in quantity and excellent in quality, and most teachers have a strong willingness for self-development. However, due to the influence of various factors such as social concepts, management systems, service platforms,

development subjects, individuals, and families, the development of human resources of retired teachers in China is still insufficient. [6] Among the existing research literature on silver-haired teachers, many have problems such as "policy-oriented", "analysis based on experience", and "high degree of homogeneity", and there are very few empirical studies. This paper conducts an empirical investigation and research on the social participation willingness of silver-haired teachers in Guangdong Province, which has important practical significance and provides factual information for the resource exploration of regional silver-haired teachers.

### 3. Methods

This paper mainly uses questionnaire survey and case interview methods to conduct a special investigation on the social participation willingness of silver-haired teachers. The survey content includes: personal status (economic health, family, etc.), life satisfaction, social participation willingness and methods, and social participation behavior. Questionnaires were distributed to silver-haired teachers in Guangdong Province, and finally 327 valid questionnaires were recovered. At the same time, 13 representative silver-haired teachers (8 female teachers and 5 male teachers) were selected for in-depth interviews to obtain more in-depth views and experiences. The questionnaire mainly combines online and offline surveys. Online, mainly through acquaintance relationships, family members are asked to assist the elderly in filling out the questionnaire. Case interviews are all conducted offline.

Among the valid samples of the questionnaire survey, there are 176 males, accounting for 53.7%, and 152 females, accounting for 46.3%. Those aged 50-59 account for 26.8%, those aged 60-69 account for 39.0%, those aged 70-79 account for 26.8%, and those aged 80 and above account for 7.3%. Those living in the Pearl River Delta region account for 58.6%, those in northern Guangdong account for 12.2%, those in western Guangdong account for 12.2%, and those in eastern Guangdong account for 17.1%. Regarding the distribution of educational levels, those with junior high school and below account for 4.9%, those with high school or technical secondary school account for 7.3%, those with junior college

account for 31.7%, those with undergraduate degree account for 31.7%, and those with postgraduate degree and above account for 24.4%. Retired kindergarten teachers account for 4.9%, retired primary school teacher account for 14.6%, retired middle school teacher account for 41.5%, and retired university teachers account for 40.0%. Overall, the sample is highly representative.

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4.1 Family Support for Silver-Haired Teachers' Social Participation

Family support has a great influence on an individual's behavior. Therefore, in analyzing family support for silver-haired teachers' social participation, nearly 80% of families hold a supportive attitude. The proportion of those who do not support is only 4.9%. Further analyzing the degree of support of different groups, there is a significant difference between age and social participation support ( $P < 0.05$ ). Silver-haired teachers aged 60-69 receive the highest degree of family support. There is also a significant difference between gender and social participation support ( $P < 0.05$ ), and male silver-haired teachers receive a higher degree of family support than female silver-haired teachers. There is a significant difference between educational background and social participation support ( $P < 0.05$ ), and the higher the educational background of silver-haired teachers, the greater the degree of family support. Combining the interview content, because many of these people have just left their jobs, most of them are physically fit, and at the same time it is difficult to get rid of the influence of the original work role on retirement life. Therefore, retired teachers in this age group have a relatively strong willingness to participate in society.

Silver-haired teachers who live only with their spouses, with their children and grandchildren, and in multigenerational households are more willing to participate in social activities than those who live alone. Moreover, the frequency of children's visits and the degree of filial piety have a significant impact ( $p < 0.05$ ). There is a significant difference between the attitude of family members towards silver-haired teachers' participation in social activities and the willingness of silver-haired teachers to

participate in volunteer education activities. ( $P = 0.000$ ). A good family support system can prompt silver-haired teachers to participate in social activities.

##### 4.2 Reasons for Social Participation: Mainly to Contribute One's Remaining Energy, and There Is A Significant Difference in Educational Background

From the perspective of the reasons/purposes of participation, the proportion of choosing to contribute one's remaining energy and realize self-worth is the highest (38.46%), followed by enriching retirement life (25.64%), meeting social needs (17.95%), personal interests (10.26%), etc. The social participation purpose of silver-haired teachers is closely related to the educational level of this group ( $P < 0.05$ ). Silver-haired teachers who have the cognition and tendency of contributing their remaining energy and realizing self-worth are more willing to participate in volunteer education activities ( $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ). A retired and reemployed chemistry professor from an undergraduate college said: "I think after retirement, first of all, I still have energy. Second, we have accumulated all kinds of experience throughout our lives. So I think that if we can pass on our experience to the younger generation, I will feel particularly happy and always have a sense of accomplishment."

##### 4.3 The Main Reasons for Not Participating in Social Activities Are Lack of Platforms, Safety Concerns, Time and Health Issues

In the sample, the main reasons for not being willing to participate in social activities are lack of platforms, concerns about safety risks ( $p = 0.004$ ), time and health ( $p = 0.006$ ), etc. Among them, retired teachers who are dissatisfied with the social participation support system have a low willingness to participate in volunteer education ( $p < 0.005$ ). Whether a suitable participation platform is found affects satisfaction with supporting facilities and services ( $p = 0.07$ ). Silver-haired teachers who obtain information about social participation activities from the community are more willing to participate in community volunteer service activities ( $p = 0.042$ ). The emergence of Internet information technology is beneficial to the social participation of retired teachers. However, in interviews, it is

found that elderly retired teachers still face difficulties in the digital divide. At present, most social participation in our country is still mainly in the form of traditional offline activities. A retired vice president of a technical college who has been retired for more than ten years in a remote area of Guangdong Province said: "Those remote mountainous areas are eagerly awaiting old professors, old experts, and old scholars with high levels and professional titles to provide comprehensive guidance in aspects such as professional quality improvement, teacher construction, and scientific research innovation of schools with backward resources through various forms such as online and offline."

#### **4.4 Participation in Economic Activities Is Greatly Related to the Work before Retirement**

As for silver-haired teachers' participation in economic activities, the activity they participate in more is teacher-related activities (31.7%), and the activity they participate in the least is technological development and application activities (2.4%). It can be seen that most of the economic activities that silver-haired teachers mainly participate in are relatively closely related to their work before retirement.

On the other hand, in terms of very few (never participating) activities, technological development and application (53.7%) and stock and fund activities (48.8%) account for a relatively large proportion. It can be seen that silver-haired teachers participate less in activities with higher technical requirements and higher risks.

### **5. Conclusions and Suggestions**

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

Differences between regions lead to differences in the degree of perfection of supporting measures for social participation enjoyed by silver-haired teachers. The more economically backward the region, the fewer corresponding supporting measures for social participation. Especially in some remote areas of Guangdong Province, these retired teachers are one of the main forces for social construction and development. They often have excellent professional skills and rich experience and unique insights in regional

education and other aspects. However, due to their older age and poor physical condition, society's attention and support for them are not in place enough. Once there is a lack of relevant service and platform support, the opportunities for retired teachers to develop are limited, and the dissemination of their own experience and wisdom will be blocked, which is generally not conducive to the healthy development of society.

Family support for silver-haired teachers' participation in social activities affects teachers' willingness to participate. If family members have an indifferent or unsupportive attitude, whether it is due to the need for care in their own families or not wanting silver-haired teachers to be too busy and exhausted, it will limit silver-haired teachers' participation in social activities to a certain extent.

The social participation support system cannot well match the participation needs of silver-haired teachers. The existing teacher retirement age policy still follows the logic of the traditional retirement system and personnel management system. Schools and society have not left a certain transition space for silver-haired teachers' new retirement life and the transformation of social roles. At present, community services in our country are still very immature, and there are still many problems in terms of systems, human resources, and funds.

Female silver-haired teachers have a strong willingness to participate in society, but there is a gap between their willingness and actual participation. Female retired teachers often play the role of taking care of family members at home, including taking care of children and grandchildren or elderly parents. These responsibilities and obligations will take up a lot of their time, making it difficult for them to participate in various social activities. In some areas in Guangdong where cultural and traditional concepts are relatively conservative, female retired teachers may encounter specific obstacles in pursuit of equal social status, such as perhaps weakening female self-confidence, academic strength, and stereotypes of participating in social spare-time activities or volunteer activities. It may also be that they do not have sufficient understanding of social platforms and social organizations, making it difficult for them to find social and volunteer activities that interest them.

## 5.2 Suggestions

This research shows that the group of silver-haired teachers has a strong willingness to participate in society and abundant potential value. To promote their effective participation, the following suggestions are proposed:

### 5.2.1 Enhance the awareness of silver-haired teachers' social participation

Regularly use various social publicity means to publicize the positive image, value, and social contributions of silver-haired teachers. Help silver-haired teachers gain respect, recognition, and support in society. This will also help attract more talents to join the team of silver-haired teachers. Publicize relevant policies, pensions, interest clubs, social volunteer activities, etc. to silver-haired teachers. Demonstrate the positive role of silver-haired teachers in social services, economic development, and other aspects. Activities such as exhibitions, lectures, and symposiums can be held to increase publicity. Investigate the living, practical, and development status of silver-haired teachers and their impact on society. According to the results, improve and perfect the care mechanism for silver-haired teachers to create and provide better services and guarantees for silver-haired teachers.

### 5.2.2 Expand participation channels and strengthen the team of silver-haired teachers

Communication and exchanges among silver-haired teachers can be promoted by establishing silver-haired teacher exchange platforms and establishing academic societies and clubs. Increase teacher training and support to improve teacher quality and development space. Explore systems such as flexible retirement and gradual retirement to provide flexible retirement options to better meet the individual needs of silver-haired teachers.

### 5.2.3 Create an atmosphere to enhance the willingness of retired teachers to participate in society and build a support system

Silver-haired teachers have their own career choices and values, and their career decisions should be respected. After retirement, silver-haired teachers can independently choose whether to continue engaging in education and teaching work or transform to other fields for work or volunteer service according to their

own interests, specialties, and personal circumstances. Hold various vocational training courses and lectures on career development and personal improvement for retired teachers to help them update their knowledge and skills, keep them professional and sensitive to the times, and increase their confidence and pride.

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