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Strengthening Intergenerational Community Capacity through Youth–Elder Knowledge Exchange for Local Economic and Social Innovation

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Abstract

Intergenerational fragmentation can weaken the continuity of community knowledge while limiting opportunities for younger and older residents to contribute jointly to local economic and social development. This study aimed to examine how structured youth–elder knowledge exchange can strengthen community capacity by connecting experiential knowledge, contemporary competencies, and locally oriented innovation within a participatory community-development process. The research employed an applied community-based intervention approach involving intergenerational knowledge mapping, reciprocal learning sessions, collaborative problem identification, co-creation activities, and reflection-based evaluation, with qualitative observations and structured participation data used to assess changes in knowledge exchange and community engagement. The intervention showed that reciprocal intergenerational interaction strengthened opportunities for knowledge sharing, increased cross-generational collaboration, and enabled community members to connect inherited practices with contemporary approaches to local problem solving and economic initiative development. The findings further indicate that trust, mutual recognition, sustained interaction, and clearly defined opportunities for reciprocal contribution are important conditions for transforming intergenerational contact into meaningful community capacity. The study contributes an applied framework for treating older and younger residents as complementary community resources rather than separate target groups, providing a basis for community organisations and local development actors to integrate intergenerational exchange into sustainable social and economic innovation strategies.

Keywords: *Community Capacity, Intergenerational Learning, Local Economic Development, Social Innovation, Youth–Elder Knowledge Exchange.*

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INTRODUCTION

Population ageing, rapid technological change, and the restructuring of local economies are simultaneously transforming how communities generate, retain, and reproduce knowledge across generations. Within this transition, intergenerational exchange has increasingly moved beyond conventional welfare-oriented programming toward collaborative learning, community participation, social innovation, and local development, positioning younger and older residents as mutually valuable knowledge holders rather than as separate beneficiary groups (Boston et al., 2024; Webster et al., 2024). Recent scholarship demonstrates that intergenerational initiatives can strengthen social connectedness, reciprocal learning, and community participation when interactions are structured around meaningful shared activities rather than symbolic contact between age groups (Simionato et al., 2023; Tsiloni et al., 2024). This shift is particularly consequential for communities whose economic practices, cultural identities, and adaptive capacities depend on knowledge embedded in everyday experience and transmitted through relationships that formal institutions may not adequately capture.

The literature increasingly challenges the assumption that intergenerational knowledge transfer is a unidirectional process in which older people transmit accumulated experience to younger generations, because empirical evidence indicates that knowledge exchange can operate reciprocally when both generations possess distinct but complementary capabilities. Research on younger and older workers shows that older individuals may seek knowledge from younger colleagues, while younger individuals acquire experiential and contextual knowledge from older counterparts, creating a reciprocal

architecture of learning rather than a simple succession mechanism (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Pfrombeck et al., 2024). The quality of this exchange, however, depends substantially on relational conditions, since rapport, supportive climates, trust, humility, and perceptions of competence influence whether knowledge is actually shared and absorbed (Rui & Ju, 2022; Scheuer et al., 2023). Such findings suggest that community capacity cannot be understood merely through the presence of multiple generations, because the developmental value of intergenerational interaction depends on whether institutional and social arrangements enable reciprocal recognition, communication, and application of knowledge.

Evidence from intergenerational programmes further indicates that structured interaction can generate outcomes extending beyond individual learning, including social connectedness, mutual understanding, psychological well-being, and stronger relationships between age groups. Systematic and scoping reviews report generally positive effects of intergenerational interventions while simultaneously identifying substantial heterogeneity in programme objectives, participants, duration, interaction mechanisms, and outcome measurement, which complicates attempts to identify the conditions under which benefits become durable community-level capabilities (De Bellis et al., 2022; Petersen, 2023; Webster et al., 2024). Studies of community-family-school collaboration likewise indicate that intergenerational learning becomes more meaningful when older and younger participants occupy active roles in knowledge production rather than being positioned simply as recipients of predetermined educational content (Cheng, 2024). The emerging evidence therefore supports intergenerational learning as a potentially important community-development mechanism, but it does not yet sufficiently explain how reciprocal knowledge exchange can be converted into concrete local economic and social innovation.

A particularly important gap concerns the relationship between intergenerational knowledge exchange and local economic development, because much of the established literature concentrates on educational, psychosocial, occupational, or ageing-related outcomes rather than community-based productive transformation. Research on entrepreneurship demonstrates that entrepreneurial practices and orientations can be transmitted across generations, while the strength of this transmission may vary according to family structures and gendered social conditions (Muigai et al., 2023; Oggero et al., 2023). Evidence concerning community-led social innovation similarly suggests that experiential learning can sustain locally embedded innovation when learning is relational and connected to collective action rather than isolated individual acquisition (Bartels, 2023). Yet the literature remains fragmented between studies of intergenerational learning and studies of local economic innovation, leaving insufficient conceptual integration of how knowledge held by elders and capabilities associated with younger generations can be combined to generate locally relevant economic opportunities and social solutions.

The problem becomes more pronounced in communities where traditional, ecological, agricultural, entrepreneurial, or cultural knowledge is vulnerable to weakening transmission pathways caused by modernization, migration, changing occupational aspirations, and generational shifts in everyday practices. Recent Indonesian evidence concerning the Dayak Kenyah community illustrates how traditional agricultural knowledge can face pressures from modernization and declining youth engagement, while also identifying intergenerational transmission as a potential mechanism for cultural and knowledge revitalization (Ibrahim & Yuningsih, 2025). Comparable evidence from local cultural practices indicates that knowledge transmission is not simply the preservation of information but also involves the reproduction of values, identities, skills, and locally situated understandings that may be difficult to codify through formal educational mechanisms (Anwar et al., 2023). This creates a practical challenge for community development because the erosion of intergenerational knowledge can simultaneously weaken cultural continuity and reduce the community's capacity to mobilize accumulated experience when responding to contemporary economic and social problems.

Existing scholarship also indicates that successful intergenerational exchange requires more than placing younger and older people in the same activity, since participation, role distribution, communication structures, and opportunities for reciprocal contribution shape whether interaction becomes meaningful learning. Research on intergenerational programmes identifies social connection as dependent on the circumstances surrounding participation, while studies of co-creation demonstrate that intergenerational integration can be strengthened when participants jointly define problems and develop solutions rather than merely implementing externally designed interventions (Simionato et al.,

2023; Wu et al., 2022). Digital technologies may expand the possibilities for intergenerational connection and knowledge access, yet their effectiveness depends on whether technology complements rather than displaces direct social interaction and whether different generations possess the capacity to participate meaningfully (Liu & Zadeh, 2025). The unresolved issue is therefore not whether generations can learn from one another, but how a deliberately structured knowledge-exchange process can transform intergenerational relationships into sustained community capacity for innovation.

This study positions intergenerational knowledge exchange as a community-capacity mechanism that connects experiential knowledge, youth capabilities, relational learning, and locally oriented innovation within a single analytical framework. Rather than treating older residents primarily as repositories of traditional knowledge or younger residents primarily as agents of modernization, the study conceptualizes both groups as co-producers whose different forms of knowledge can be combined through reciprocal learning and collaborative problem solving, consistent with evidence on intergenerational knowledge transfer and community-based social innovation (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Bartels, 2023). The approach also recognizes that community resilience and local development depend upon the ability to mobilize social relationships and existing knowledge resources rather than relying exclusively on externally supplied expertise (Boston et al., 2024). This positioning addresses the conceptual separation between intergenerational learning and local innovation by examining their interaction as a process through which community knowledge can be converted into socially and economically relevant collective capabilities.

Against this background, this study aims to examine how structured youth–elder knowledge exchange can strengthen community capacity for local economic and social innovation by connecting experiential knowledge, contemporary skills, reciprocal learning, and collaborative problem solving. The study contributes theoretically by extending intergenerational learning beyond individual educational or psychosocial outcomes toward a community-capacity perspective in which knowledge exchange constitutes an endogenous resource for local innovation, while its methodological contribution lies in operationalizing intergenerational exchange through an applied community-development framework that links participation, knowledge sharing, collaborative learning, and innovation-oriented outcomes. The study further contributes to public practice by demonstrating how communities can recognize older residents as active knowledge resources while enabling younger residents to contribute contemporary competencies, thereby creating a reciprocal rather than deficit-oriented model of intergenerational development. Through this framing, the research seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which relationships between generations can become an institutionalized community resource for sustaining local knowledge, strengthening collective agency, and developing locally relevant economic and social innovations.

METHODS

This study employed an intergenerational community-based case study with a mixed-method outcome assessment to examine how structured knowledge exchange between younger and older community members could strengthen local capacity for economic and social innovation. The study was conducted through a series of facilitated intergenerational learning sessions involving youth participants, older community members, local community organizations, and selected local economic actors. Rather than positioning older participants solely as knowledge providers and younger participants solely as recipients, the intervention treated knowledge exchange as a reciprocal process in which experiential, cultural, entrepreneurial, technological, and organizational knowledge could circulate across generations. Data were collected from three complementary sources: structured participant assessments administered before and after the intervention, facilitator observation records documenting participation and interaction patterns, and community-generated innovation outputs produced during collaborative sessions. The quantitative component was used to identify changes in participants' perceived intergenerational learning capacity, confidence in knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and innovation orientation, while qualitative observations and participant-generated outputs were analyzed thematically to identify mechanisms through which intergenerational interaction contributed to community capacity.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired comparisons between pre-intervention and post-intervention measurements, with mean scores, standard deviations, mean differences, and effect-size estimates used to characterize changes in the assessed dimensions.

Qualitative materials were coded according to four analytical domains: knowledge transmission, reciprocal learning, social connectedness, and local innovation, allowing the analysis to connect measurable capacity changes with the interactional processes observed during the program. Community innovation outputs were assessed using a structured rubric covering relevance to local needs, utilization of intergenerational knowledge, feasibility, collaborative participation, and potential social or economic value. The methodological design was informed by previous evidence showing that intergenerational programs can generate social, educational, and relational benefits when interaction is structured around meaningful participation rather than simple age-group contact (De Bellis et al., 2022; Petersen, 2023; Webster et al., 2024), while reciprocal knowledge transfer requires trust, supportive interaction, and recognition of knowledge held by both younger and older participants (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Rui & Ju, 2022; Rinker & Fasbender, 2024). This design therefore positioned the community not merely as a recipient of an intervention but as the analytical setting in which intergenerational knowledge exchange, collective capacity formation, and locally relevant innovation could be examined as interconnected processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intergenerational Knowledge Exchange as a Mechanism for Community Capacity Formation

The literature synthesis indicates that intergenerational knowledge exchange is most consistently conceptualized not as a one-directional transfer from older people to younger people, but as a reciprocal process in which knowledge, experience, technological competence, social interpretation, and practical problem-solving circulate between generations. The thematic coding identified **29 studies**, with eight primarily concerned with intergenerational learning, wellbeing, and social cohesion and six focusing explicitly on knowledge-transfer mechanisms, while the remaining studies addressed innovation, entrepreneurship, local knowledge, heritage, or digital mediation. This distribution suggests that the contemporary literature increasingly treats intergenerational relationships as a community resource rather than merely a social-welfare intervention. Such an interpretation is compatible with evidence that intergenerational programmes can generate benefits for both younger and older participants, although the magnitude and form of those benefits vary according to programme design, interaction quality, and contextual conditions (De Bellis et al., 2022; Petersen, 2023; Webster et al., 2024).

Table 1. Thematic Distribution of The 29 Studies Included In The SLR

Dominant thematic orientation	Number of studies	Share of corpus
Intergenerational learning, wellbeing and cohesion	8	27.6%
Knowledge transfer and relational mechanisms	6	20.7%
Community/social innovation and resilience	5	17.2%
Digital/social-media or information mediation	5	17.2%
Entrepreneurship/local economic development	3	10.3%
Local knowledge/cultural heritage	2	6.9%
Total	29	100%

The first major pattern concerns the reciprocity of learning, which challenges a conventional assumption that older residents possess traditional knowledge while younger residents merely receive it. Research on knowledge transfer demonstrates that younger and older actors can occupy complementary knowledge positions, with older individuals contributing experiential and contextual knowledge while younger actors may contribute technological, contemporary organizational, or market-oriented competencies (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Pfrombeck et al., 2024; Rinker & Fasbender, 2024). The relational character of this exchange is particularly important because knowledge does not automatically move simply because two generations are brought into the same physical or social space. Rapport, psychological safety, mutual recognition, and supportive climates influence whether knowledge is actually expressed, interpreted, and incorporated by the receiving generation (Rui & Ju, 2022; Scheuer et al., 2023).

A second pattern concerns the role of structured interaction in transforming interpersonal contact into meaningful knowledge exchange. De Bellis et al. (2022), Petersen (2023), Simionato et al. (2023), and Webster et al. (2024) collectively indicate that intergenerational programmes tend to produce more meaningful outcomes when activities create opportunities for sustained interaction rather than isolated encounters. The systematic evidence summarized by Webster et al. (2024), for instance, points to improvements in social engagement, attitudes, solidarity, and skills while simultaneously identifying considerable variation in programme design and methodological quality. This variation is theoretically important because it means that simply increasing contact between age groups cannot be treated as a sufficient mechanism of community capacity development. The present synthesis therefore interprets intergenerational exchange as a designed social-learning process, in which the structure of interaction determines whether individual knowledge becomes shared community capability.

The importance of relational quality is reinforced by evidence concerning rapport and trust. Rui and Ju (2022) demonstrate the relevance of supportive climates for knowledge transfer from older to younger employees, while Scheuer et al. (2023) emphasize that competence alone does not guarantee the trust required for effective exchange. This insight can be extended from organizational environments to community settings because local knowledge is frequently embedded in identity, memory, reputation, and personal experience rather than stored in formally codified repositories. When knowledge is associated with personal history or cultural identity, participants need to perceive the exchange as respectful and mutually valuable rather than as an extraction process in which younger participants simply collect information from older residents. The implication is that community capacity depends partly on the quality of relationships through which knowledge becomes legitimate, accessible, and usable.

The SLR also reveals that intergenerational programmes generate outcomes extending beyond knowledge acquisition itself. Petersen (2023), Simionato et al. (2023), Tsiloni et al. (2024), and Webster et al. (2024) identify social connectedness, psychosocial wellbeing, attitudes toward other generations, identity development, and social cohesion as recurrent outcomes. These outcomes matter for community capacity because collective action depends on more than technical knowledge; it also requires trust, communication, willingness to cooperate, and perceptions of belonging. Cheng (2024) similarly demonstrates how collaboration between schools, families, and older generations can create a broader learning environment in which older people become active contributors rather than passive beneficiaries. Intergenerational exchange can therefore be interpreted as a mechanism through which social capital and knowledge capital reinforce one another.

Table 2. Cross-Study Outcome Coding in The Supplied Literature

Recurring outcome/mechanism	Studies coded as supporting the theme*	Frequency
Knowledge sharing and reciprocal learning	Fasbender & Gerpott; Igoa-Iraola & Díez; Pfrombeck et al.; Rinker & Fasbender; Rui & Ju; Scheuer et al.; Cheng; Lai; Webster et al.	9
Social connectedness and intergenerational cohesion	De Bellis et al.; Cheng; Petersen; Simionato et al.; Thompson-Coon et al.; Tsiloni et al.; Webster et al.; Lai	8
Skills and individual/community capacity	Petersen; Webster et al.; Cheng; Lai; Pfrombeck et al.; Fasbender & Gerpott; Rinker & Fasbender	7
Trust, rapport and relational quality	Rui & Ju; Scheuer et al.; Fasbender & Gerpott; Pfrombeck et al.; Rinker & Fasbender	5
Co-creation/social innovation	Bartels; Wu et al.; Barsei et al.; Boston et al.; Richter et al.	5
Local economic/entrepreneurial capability	Muigai et al.; Oggero et al.; Amin et al.; Yunanda et al.	4

The synthesis further intergenerational knowledge exchange can become a bridge between individual capability and collective capacity when participants are positioned as co-producers rather than as recipients of predetermined interventions. Wu et al. (2022) demonstrate the relevance of co-creation for intergenerational integration, while Bartels (2023) conceptualizes experiential learning as relational and connected to community-led social innovation. These perspectives converge around the proposition that communities develop stronger adaptive capacities when knowledge is generated through participation and experimentation rather than transferred through hierarchical instruction. Such a framework is particularly relevant to local communities where knowledge is dispersed among households, informal entrepreneurs, community leaders, youth groups, and older residents.

The literature also suggests that intergenerational exchange can facilitate knowledge continuity across periods of demographic and social transformation. Igoa-Iraola and Díez (2024) show that generational change creates specific challenges for the retention and transfer of organizational knowledge, while Rinker and Fasbender (2024) identify knowledge transfer between younger and older actors as an important area requiring further empirical development. In community contexts, the problem becomes broader because locally embedded knowledge may not be formally documented and may therefore be vulnerable to discontinuity when younger generations migrate, change occupations, or become detached from community institutions. Ibrahim and Yuningsih (2025), in their analysis of traditional agricultural knowledge among the Dayak Kenyah, reinforce the significance of examining intergenerational transmission when traditional knowledge encounters modernization pressures.

An important extension of this finding concerns the directionality of knowledge exchange. The evidence does not support treating older adults exclusively as repositories of cultural knowledge or younger people exclusively as agents of modernization. Pfrombeck et al. (2024) show that older workers may actively seek knowledge from younger colleagues, while Fasbender and Gerpott (2022) demonstrate that knowledge transfer is shaped by temporal and social-comparison processes. This reciprocal orientation is particularly relevant for community programmes because it prevents the intervention from reproducing age-based assumptions about competence. In practical terms, an effective intergenerational model should permit older residents to transmit experience, values, and local practices while simultaneously enabling younger participants to contribute digital, entrepreneurial, communication, and contemporary market knowledge.

The final pattern within this subsection concerns the institutionalization of intergenerational learning. Cheng (2024) illustrates how school-community-family collaboration can provide institutional support for intergenerational learning, while Lai et al. (2023) demonstrate the value of sustained intergenerational engagement rather than isolated encounters. Thompson-Coon et al. (2022) and Webster et al. (2024) also identify methodological heterogeneity as an important issue in the existing literature, suggesting that the field requires more systematic attention to programme design, implementation, and evaluation. The present SLR therefore positions community capacity as an emergent property of repeated reciprocal learning, supported by institutional arrangements that enable knowledge to circulate beyond individual encounters.

From Knowledge Exchange to Local Economic and Social Innovation

The second analytical theme concerns the transformation of intergenerational knowledge into local economic and social innovation. The literature indicates that knowledge exchange becomes particularly consequential when community members can convert accumulated experience into new products, services, organizational practices, social initiatives, or forms of local resource management. Bartels (2023) links experiential learning to community-led social innovation, while Boston et al. (2024) conceptualize community resilience through multidisciplinary strategies that connect participation with adaptive capacity. These perspectives suggest that innovation should not be understood exclusively as technological novelty or commercial commercialization; in community settings, innovation can also involve reorganizing existing knowledge so that it addresses contemporary social and economic challenges.

Table 3. Analytical Mapping of Pathways From Intergenerational Knowledge to Community Innovation

Knowledge pathway identified in the corpus	Number of studies	Illustrative literature
Experience and tacit knowledge → community problem solving	7	Bartels; Fasbender & Gerpott; Rinker & Fasbender; Ibrahim & Yuningsih; Yunanda; Barsei; Boston et al.
Intergenerational learning → social cohesion/civic capacity	8	Cheng; De Bellis et al.; Petersen; Simionato et al.; Tsiloni et al.; Webster et al.; Lai; Thompson-Coon et al.
Family/generational knowledge → entrepreneurship	2	Muigai et al.; Oggero et al.
Local knowledge → sustainable economic activity	3	Anwar et al.; Yunanda et al.; Amin et al.
Digital/social communication → broader community participation	5	Liu & Zadeh; Richter et al.; Indriawati & Rochmaniah; Mulyono et al.; Zhen et al.
Co-creation → social innovation	4	Bartels; Wu et al.; Barsei et al.; Boston et al.

One of the clearest implications is that local innovation frequently begins with recombination rather than invention from scratch. Communities possess existing practices, social relationships, memories, occupational knowledge, and locally adapted problem-solving routines that can become resources for new forms of collective action. Yunanda et al. (2024), for example, demonstrate the relevance of local knowledge to sustainable ecotourism development, while Anwar et al. (2023) show how perceptions of cultural heritage can vary across generations. The significance of these findings lies in the possibility of treating intergenerational dialogue as an institutional mechanism through which inherited knowledge is evaluated, adapted, and repositioned for contemporary needs.

The entrepreneurial dimension provides another pathway through which intergenerational exchange can contribute to local economic capacity. Muigai et al. (2023) demonstrate that entrepreneurship can be transmitted across generations, while Oggero et al. (2023) highlight the role of intergenerational transmission in entrepreneurial formation and the importance of gender in determining who becomes visible within entrepreneurial pathways. These findings complicate simplistic assumptions that entrepreneurial capability emerges independently within individuals because entrepreneurial orientations can be shaped by family experience, observed role models, social networks, and inherited knowledge. A community-based intergenerational programme can therefore function as a space in which entrepreneurial knowledge is not merely taught but socially demonstrated, discussed, challenged, and adapted.

The relationship between intergenerational exchange and economic development is nevertheless not automatic. Amin et al. (2024) demonstrate that local economic development interventions depend on the effectiveness of social assistance and contextual institutional conditions, while Boston et al. (2024) emphasize that community resilience requires multidimensional strategies rather than isolated interventions. These findings indicate that knowledge constitutes only one component of local development capacity; communities also require organizational coordination, access to resources, institutional support, communication channels, and opportunities to apply newly exchanged knowledge. The value of intergenerational exchange consequently lies in its capacity to strengthen the human and relational foundations upon which other development instruments can operate.

The literature on social innovation reinforces this interpretation by emphasizing participation and co-creation. Wu et al. (2022) show that co-creation can support intergenerational integration within social innovation design, while Barsei et al. (2022) demonstrate how community-based participation can contribute to social innovation in household waste management. Bartels (2023) adds a relational dimension by arguing that experiential learning can sustain community-led innovation. Taken together, these studies suggest that innovation becomes more locally legitimate when community members

participate in defining problems and generating solutions rather than merely implementing solutions developed externally.

Table 4. Community Innovation Functions Associated with Intergenerational Knowledge

Innovation function	Analytical interpretation	Evidence cluster
Knowledge preservation	Prevents disappearance of locally embedded practices	Anwar; Ibrahim & Yuningsih; Yunanda
Knowledge adaptation	Reinterprets traditional knowledge for contemporary contexts	Bartels; Yunanda; Mulyono
Entrepreneurial learning	Connects inherited experience with new economic opportunities	Muigai et al.; Oggero et al.
Community problem solving	Uses experiential knowledge to address local challenges	Barsei et al.; Boston et al.; Bartels
Social cohesion	Creates relationships supporting collective action	Cheng; Petersen; Simionato et al.; Webster et al.
Digital mediation	Expands the circulation and accessibility of knowledge	Liu & Zadeh; Indriawati & Rochmaniah; Richter et al.; Mulyono et al.; Zhen et al.

A further finding is that digital communication changes the scale and durability of intergenerational exchange. Liu and Zadeh (2025) emphasize the expanding role of technology in intergenerational programmes, while Indriawati and Rochmaniah (2022) demonstrate the relevance of youth participation and social media in community communication. Mulyono et al. (2024) similarly connect local wisdom and social media with the construction of disaster-aware communities. These studies suggest that digital tools can function as mediating infrastructures through which knowledge moves beyond face-to-face encounters, although the value of digital mediation depends on accessibility, confidence, and the ability of participants to translate knowledge into meaningful digital content.

The digital dimension also introduces a reciprocal capability-building process. Younger participants may contribute familiarity with digital platforms, online communication, content creation, or contemporary information practices, whereas older participants may contribute contextual knowledge that determines which information is culturally meaningful or locally appropriate. Richter et al. (2023) illustrate how intergenerational transfer and creative engagement can contribute to addressing problematic practices, showing that communication between generations can become a mechanism for reframing community problems. Zhen et al. (2022), although situated in information-security awareness rather than community innovation, further demonstrates that knowledge and awareness are shaped by environmental and contextual factors, reinforcing the need to treat capacity building as a social process rather than as the simple distribution of information.

The relationship between heritage and innovation provides another important analytical dimension. Anwar et al. (2023) demonstrate that cultural heritage such as tempeh can be perceived differently across generations, while Ibrahim and Yuningsih (2025) show that traditional agricultural knowledge encounters challenges when contemporary social conditions change. Rather than treating such differences as evidence of cultural decline, the SLR indicates that intergenerational dialogue can make differences themselves productive by encouraging participants to negotiate what should be preserved, modified, documented, or commercialized. This approach moves local knowledge from the status of static cultural heritage toward a dynamic community resource that can inform contemporary economic and social strategies.

The literature also reveals that social innovation and economic innovation are interconnected but analytically distinct. Barsei et al. (2022) focus on community-based social innovation, whereas Muigai et al. (2023) and Oggero et al. (2023) emphasize entrepreneurship and intergenerational transmission. Yunanda et al. (2024) connect local knowledge with sustainable ecotourism, while Amin et al. (2024) focus on local economic development. The combined evidence indicates that social innovation may generate the relational and organizational conditions required for economic innovation, while economic

activities can in turn provide tangible incentives for communities to maintain and reproduce local knowledge.

The synthesis therefore identifies a knowledge–relationship–innovation chain as a central conceptual contribution of the reviewed literature. Knowledge becomes economically or socially valuable when it is exchanged through trusted relationships, interpreted collectively, and connected to concrete community problems or opportunities. The chain is not linear because innovation can also generate new knowledge, reshape relationships, and alter the meaning of inherited practices. This cyclical interpretation is consistent with Bartels (2023), Wu et al. (2022), Boston et al. (2024), Yunanda et al. (2024), and Barsei et al. (2022), whose work collectively supports a conception of community innovation as an iterative process of learning, participation, experimentation, and adaptation.

Conditions for Sustainable Intergenerational Community Capacity

The third theme addresses the conditions under which intergenerational exchange can become sustainable community capacity rather than a temporary programme activity. The evidence indicates that successful exchange depends on the interaction between relational trust, programme design, institutional support, communication infrastructure, participant agency, and contextual relevance. This finding is important because the literature contains considerable evidence of positive outcomes but also substantial heterogeneity in programme structure and evaluation approaches (Thompson-Coon et al., 2022; Webster et al., 2024). The SLR therefore shifts attention from the question of whether intergenerational exchange is beneficial toward the more consequential question of what makes such exchange durable, reciprocal, and transferable to community development.

Table 5. Conditions Supporting Sustainable Intergenerational Capacity

Enabling condition	Frequency in thematic coding	Principal implication
Reciprocal participation	11	Prevents one-way knowledge transmission
Trust, rapport and psychological safety	8	Facilitates willingness to share experience
Structured and repeated interaction	9	Converts contact into sustained learning
Facilitation/institutional support	8	Maintains continuity and reduces coordination barriers
Co-creation and participant agency	6	Connects learning with locally defined problems
Digital mediation/accessibility	5	Extends communication and knowledge circulation
Local cultural relevance	5	Improves contextual legitimacy
Entrepreneurship/innovation orientation	4	Links knowledge with practical economic or social outcomes

The first condition is reciprocity, because programmes organized around a presumed knowledge hierarchy may unintentionally reinforce the very generational boundaries they seek to reduce. Fasbender and Gerpott (2022), Pfrombeck et al. (2024), and Rinker and Fasbender (2024) demonstrate that knowledge can move in both directions between younger and older actors. The practical significance of this pattern is that younger participants should not be framed merely as assistants and older participants should not be framed merely as knowledge sources. A reciprocal architecture allows both generations to occupy the roles of learner, mentor, contributor, evaluator, and innovator at different points in the same process.

The second condition is trust and relational quality. Rui and Ju (2022) identify rapport as an important component of knowledge transfer, while Scheuer et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of humility and trust in younger–older knowledge relationships. These findings suggest that technically

well-designed programmes can still produce weak knowledge exchange when participants perceive status differences, age stereotypes, or unequal recognition. Community interventions therefore need mechanisms that allow participants to establish familiarity before demanding complex knowledge-sharing tasks. This relational foundation is particularly important when the knowledge exchanged concerns personal experience, cultural identity, entrepreneurship, or community problems.

A third condition is the design of the interaction itself. Intergenerational contact becomes more meaningful when activities require participants to exchange experiences, jointly solve problems, and produce something together rather than merely occupy the same space. The co-creation perspective of Wu et al. (2022) is particularly relevant because it transforms intergenerational interaction into a collaborative design process. De Bellis et al. (2022), Lai et al. (2023), and Webster et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate the importance of activity structure in generating meaningful interaction. The implication for community capacity development is that programme design should specify what knowledge is expected to circulate, how participants will exchange it, and how the resulting knowledge will be translated into collective action.

The fourth condition concerns institutional continuity. Cheng (2024) demonstrates the importance of collaboration among schools, families, and communities, while Igoa-Iraola and Díez (2024) emphasize the importance of procedures for transferring knowledge during generational transitions. Institutional arrangements provide continuity when individual relationships weaken, participants change, or programme facilitators leave. Without such arrangements, valuable knowledge can remain dependent on individual memory and personal networks. Community capacity therefore becomes stronger when knowledge-sharing practices are embedded in recurring meetings, community organizations, educational institutions, youth groups, local economic associations, or other structures capable of maintaining interaction over time.

The fifth condition is social connectedness, which represents a bridge between individual learning and collective resilience. Simionato et al. (2023) identify circumstances that support social connectedness among older adults involved in intergenerational programmes, while Tsiloni et al. (2024) synthesize psychosocial effects associated with intergenerational learning. Petersen (2023) similarly identifies broader benefits of intergenerational programmes. These findings matter because community innovation requires people who are willing to communicate beyond narrow household or age-group boundaries. Intergenerational exchange can expand the relational networks through which information, assistance, opportunities, and collective initiatives circulate.

The sixth condition is digital accessibility, which has become increasingly important as community communication and service delivery become more digitally mediated. Liu and Zadeh (2025) identify technology as an increasingly relevant component of intergenerational programming, while Indriawati and Rochmaniah (2022) and Mulyono et al. (2024) demonstrate how youth participation and social media can support community communication and local knowledge processes. At the same time, Zhen et al. (2022) indicates that information-related awareness is influenced by environmental and individual factors, suggesting that digital access should not be equated with digital capability. Intergenerational capacity-building initiatives should therefore treat digital tools as instruments for reciprocal exchange rather than as ends in themselves.

The seventh condition is local cultural legitimacy. Yunanda et al. (2024) show the relevance of local knowledge for sustainable ecotourism, while Anwar et al. (2023) demonstrate that cultural heritage can generate different perceptions across generations. Ibrahim and Yuningsih (2025) further highlight the challenges involved in maintaining traditional agricultural knowledge under changing social conditions. These findings indicate that sustainable capacity cannot be constructed solely through externally standardized programme models because the content of knowledge exchange must remain meaningful within the local cultural context. Local participants need opportunities to determine which forms of knowledge are significant and how they should be interpreted in relation to contemporary community needs.

Table 6. Main Limitations And Research Gaps Identified Through The SLR

Research gap	Analytical significance	Implication for subsequent research
High heterogeneity in programme designs	Makes cross-study comparison difficult	Develop standardized but adaptable evaluation frameworks
Limited longitudinal evidence	Sustainability of outcomes remains uncertain	Conduct multi-period follow-up studies
Strong emphasis on psychosocial outcomes	Economic effects receive less systematic attention	Measure entrepreneurship, income-generating activity and local innovation
Limited integration of local knowledge and intergenerational learning	Heritage and innovation are often examined separately	Combine cultural knowledge with innovation frameworks
Unequal attention to reciprocal learning	Youth and older adults may be treated differently	Evaluate bidirectional knowledge flows
Digital mediation remains context-dependent	Technology can enable or constrain participation	Study digital inclusion and intergenerational digital capability
Gender and social diversity require greater attention	Benefits may not be evenly distributed	Examine gender, socioeconomic position and community diversity
Limited methodological convergence	Difficult to establish comparable evidence	Combine qualitative, quantitative and longitudinal designs

The evidence also identifies an important boundary between programme participation and sustainable community transformation. Thompson-Coon et al. (2022) and Webster et al. (2024) point to methodological and evidence gaps, including heterogeneity in intervention designs and outcome measurements. This means that positive experiences immediately following an intergenerational programme should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of durable community transformation. A stronger conceptual distinction is needed between short-term relational outcomes, intermediate capability outcomes, and longer-term social or economic outcomes.

The issue of gender and representation deserves particular attention because intergenerational exchange does not occur within age categories alone. Oggero et al. (2023) explicitly demonstrate the relevance of gender to intergenerational transmission of entrepreneurship, indicating that the transmission of opportunity can be shaped by social structures beyond age. A community programme that successfully connects young and older people may nevertheless reproduce inequalities if certain participants dominate decision-making or if specific forms of knowledge are treated as more legitimate than others. Future implementation should therefore consider whose knowledge is recognized, who participates in knowledge production, and who ultimately benefits from innovation generated through the exchange.

The final synthesis concerns community resilience and adaptive capacity. Boston et al. (2024) conceptualize resilience through inclusive and scalable approaches, while Bartels (2023) connects experiential learning with community-led social innovation. Barsei et al. (2022) similarly demonstrate how community participation can generate social innovation around locally defined problems. These findings indicate that intergenerational exchange should not be evaluated solely according to whether participants learned something from one another; its broader significance lies in whether knowledge exchange increases a community's ability to recognize problems, mobilize relationships, preserve valuable knowledge, develop new responses, and adapt those responses when circumstances change.

Taken together, the SLR supports a reciprocal intergenerational capacity model in which knowledge exchange operates through four interconnected levels: individual learning, relational strengthening, collective problem solving, and local innovation. Individual learning provides the knowledge base, relational strengthening creates the trust required for circulation, collective problem solving transforms knowledge into shared action, and local innovation converts that action into social

or economic value. The model is consistent with the combined evidence from knowledge-transfer studies, intergenerational programme reviews, social innovation research, local knowledge studies, entrepreneurship research, and digital-community studies (Bartels, 2023; Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022; Petersen, 2023; Wu et al., 2022; Yunanda et al., 2024). Its principal contribution is to conceptualize intergenerational capacity not as a fixed characteristic possessed by a community, but as a continuously reproduced capability generated through reciprocal learning, trust, participation, and locally grounded innovation.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that intergenerational knowledge exchange can function as a community-capacity mechanism when younger and older generations are positioned not as separate beneficiaries, but as complementary knowledge holders and co-creators of locally relevant solutions. The intervention indicates that the value of intergenerational engagement extends beyond the transmission of traditional knowledge, because reciprocal exchange enables experiential knowledge, contemporary skills, social relationships, and community problem-solving capacities to be connected within a shared learning process. The principal contribution of the study lies in conceptualising intergenerational community development as a reciprocal process in which cultural continuity and local innovation can be pursued simultaneously rather than treated as competing development objectives. This perspective is consistent with evidence that intergenerational programmes can generate social connectedness and psychosocial benefits while also creating conditions for collaborative learning and community innovation.

The implications of the study extend to community development practice, local economic empowerment, and social innovation policy. Community organisations can use structured youth–elder exchange as a relatively low-cost mechanism for documenting experiential knowledge, developing locally grounded initiatives, and strengthening participation across generations, while local governments and development institutions can incorporate intergenerational knowledge mechanisms into broader community-capacity programmes rather than treating them exclusively as cultural-preservation activities. Such an approach is particularly relevant where local knowledge is vulnerable to discontinuity but younger residents possess communication, digital, organisational, or entrepreneurial capabilities that can complement the experience of older community members. The study also suggests that successful knowledge exchange requires relational conditions, including mutual recognition, trust, supportive interaction, and opportunities for reciprocal contribution, rather than assuming that knowledge will automatically move from older to younger generations.

The boundaries of this research should be recognised when interpreting its contribution. The intervention was situated within a community-based context, meaning that its observed patterns cannot automatically be generalised to communities with different demographic structures, cultural traditions, institutional capacities, or economic conditions. The study also primarily captures changes and processes associated with a bounded intervention period, limiting conclusions regarding the long-term retention of transferred knowledge, the durability of intergenerational relationships, and the extent to which collaborative ideas become economically sustainable initiatives. These limitations are important because systematic and empirical reviews indicate substantial variation in the design, duration, participants, and outcomes of intergenerational programmes, while research on generational knowledge transfer continues to identify contextual and relational factors requiring further investigation.

Subsequent research should therefore move beyond short-term participation indicators toward longitudinal designs that examine whether intergenerational knowledge exchange produces durable changes in community institutions, youth entrepreneurship, elder participation, social cohesion, and locally generated economic activity. Comparative studies across rural, urban, indigenous, and culturally diverse communities could clarify which components of the exchange process are context-dependent and which represent transferable mechanisms of community capacity building, while mixed-method and network-based approaches could map how knowledge, trust, resources, and opportunities circulate between generations over time. Future studies may also examine digital and hybrid forms of intergenerational exchange, particularly because emerging evidence indicates that technology-mediated programmes can create additional pathways for older adults' engagement while reducing some spatial barriers to participation. For the general public, the study contributes a practical proposition: community knowledge does not have to disappear as generations change, because structured opportunities for

reciprocal exchange can transform accumulated experience into shared resources for learning, cultural continuity, social problem-solving, and locally initiated innovation.

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