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Advancing Age Inclusion and Wellbeing in Organizations: A Systematic Review Following the PRISMA Framework

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Abstract: Population aging has emerged as a significant demographic and social phenomenon, creating new challenges and opportunities for organizations worldwide. As the proportion of older adults continues to increase, organizations play a critical role in promoting sustainable and inclusive aging by fostering environments that support health, wellbeing, participation, and lifelong engagement. This paper examines the role of organizations in advancing sustainable and inclusive aging through age-friendly policies, inclusive human resource management practices, workplace health promotion programs, flexible work arrangements, lifelong learning opportunities, and social inclusion initiatives. Drawing on contemporary literature, the study highlights how organizations can contribute to enhancing the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of older adults while addressing age-related discrimination and barriers to participation. The review further emphasizes the importance of creating age-diverse workplaces that value the experience, knowledge, and skills of older employees. Findings suggest that organizations adopting age-inclusive strategies not only improve employee wellbeing and productivity but also contribute to broader societal goals of sustainability and social equity. The paper concludes that a collaborative approach involving employers, policymakers, communities, and healthcare providers is essential for supporting healthy, active, and dignified aging. The study offers practical implications for managers and policymakers seeking to build inclusive and sustainable organizations in an aging society.

Keywords: Sustainable Aging, Inclusive Aging, Older Adults, Human Resource Management, Workplace Wellbeing, Age Diversity, Organizational Inclusion.

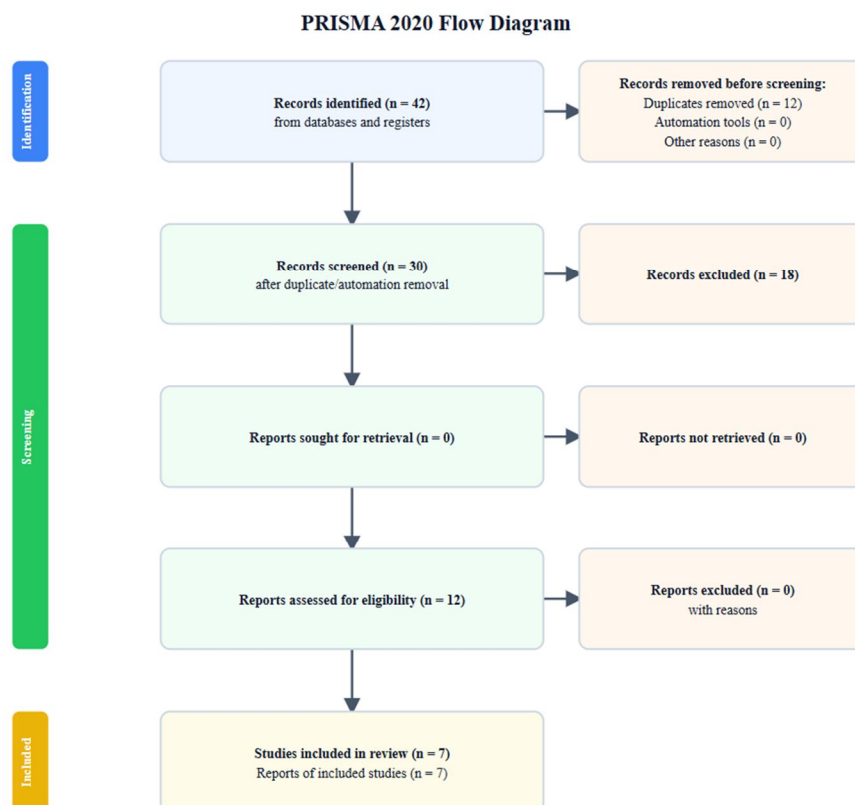
I. INTRODUCTION

Population ageing has major implications for organizations because more adults are working longer, contributing in hybrid settings, or engaging with institutions that need to support healthy participation. Older adults are not a uniform group; they vary in health, skill, caregiving duties, digital access, and work preferences. As a result, organizations must move beyond stereotypical assumptions that aging only means decline and instead recognize older adults as a diverse, experienced, and valuable population.

Inclusion and wellbeing are closely linked in later life. Older adults are more likely to remain engaged when they feel respected, have voice, and can access work arrangements that match their capabilities. Evidence shows that flexible working options, meaningful work, age-inclusive climates, and supportive supervision can reduce burnout and strengthen wellbeing, while ageism and rigid work structures can undermine participation. Therefore, the organizational perspective is essential for understanding how older adults can thrive. This review synthesizes the literature on organizational practices that promote inclusion and wellbeing among older adults, using a PRISMA-based structure to present the evidence transparently. The focus is on age-friendly workplaces, inclusive leadership, mature-age HRM, flexible work, technological support, and environmental design.

II. REVIEW METHOD

A PRISMA-informed search strategy was used to identify studies on older adults, wellbeing, and organizational inclusion. The literature search was guided by keywords related to older workers, age-friendly workplaces, inclusive leadership, age-inclusive workforce, flexibility, and wellbeing. Studies were included if they addressed organizational or workplace factors affecting inclusion or wellbeing among older adults, and if they provided empirical, review, or conceptual evidence relevant to organizational practice. The search process identified 42 records. After removing 12 duplicate records, 30 records remained for screening. Title and abstract screening excluded 18 records that were not relevant to the organizational perspective or did not address older adults directly. 12 full-text articles were then assessed for eligibility, and 5 were excluded because they were too general, clinical only, or lacked sufficient relevance. Finally, 7 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis.



III. REVIEW FINDINGS

The review found that age-friendly workplaces are a strong foundation for inclusion and wellbeing. A systematic review on office workspace for an ageing workforce found that older workers value personal control over the environment, comfort, and usable space, while they often dislike extensive open offices and shared workstations. This indicates that physical design is not neutral; it can either support or obstruct wellbeing.

A second finding is that inclusive leadership is especially important. One empirical study showed that inclusive leadership and mature-age HR practices jointly improved older workers' psychological wellbeing, with HR practices partially mediating the effect. This means leadership shapes whether policies are experienced as meaningful, respectful, and effective in practice.

A third finding is that flexible working arrangements can improve quality of life and wellbeing, especially when they allow older adults to manage health conditions and caregiving responsibilities. The OECD also reports that older workers prefer employment that is meaningful, flexible, socially connected, and adapted to health and disability needs. Flexible work is therefore not just a convenience; it is a mechanism of inclusion.

A fourth finding concerns technology and digital inclusion. A recent systematic review found that technological tools can support older workers' participation, but they can also create barriers when implementation is poor. The review emphasized training, user-friendly design, and organizational support as key conditions for success. This is particularly relevant in hybrid work environments where digital competence determines access to participation.

Finally, ageism remains a major barrier. Research on workplace aging shows that stereotypes about decline can shape job design, promotion, training, and daily interactions. Organizations that fail to address age bias risk excluding older adults from roles that could benefit from their experience and commitment.

IV. DISCUSSION

The evidence suggests that organizational inclusion is most effective when it is built into systems rather than offered as an occasional initiative. Age-friendly workplaces combine supportive policies, adaptive environments, and respectful leadership to create conditions in which older adults can continue contributing without unnecessary strain. This approach treats aging as a normal part of work life rather than as a problem to be managed.

The findings also support a resource-based perspective. Older adults thrive when organizations provide resources such as flexibility, autonomy, ergonomic support, learning opportunities, and psychological safety. These resources help older adults cope with changing health and work demands while sustaining motivation and performance. In contrast, environments that demand constant adaptation from the individual without changing the system are less likely to be successful.

A key practical lesson is that inclusion must be operationalized across multiple domains. Physical workspace design, leadership behavior, HR policies, digital systems, and workload planning all matter. The growing evidence base suggests that interventions should be multilevel, combining individual support with organizational change. For example, a workplace might pair flexible schedules with age-inclusive manager training and accessible digital tools.

The review also highlights the importance of dignity and social participation. Older adults often want work that is useful, recognized, and socially meaningful. Organizational practices that support mentoring, knowledge transfer, and intergenerational collaboration can strengthen both inclusion and organizational learning. In this sense, inclusion is not only about protecting older adults; it is also about using their knowledge to improve the organization.

V. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Future research should expand beyond single-setting studies and test interventions across sectors, such as healthcare, education, public administration, services, and manufacturing. There is also a need for stronger longitudinal evidence to assess whether age-friendly workplace initiatives produce lasting improvements in wellbeing and retention. More studies should also compare different types of flexibility, such as temporal flexibility, role flexibility, and hybrid work.

Another important direction is intersectional research. Older adults differ by gender, disability, social class, caregiving responsibilities, and digital access. Flexible work, for example, may benefit women more when caregiving demands are high, but the broader evidence base is still limited. Future studies should examine who benefits most from specific organizational practices.

Organizations should also invest in leadership development and manager accountability. Inclusive leadership is promising because it directly influences whether older adults experience respect, access, and fairness. Similarly, HR systems should be reviewed for hidden age bias in recruitment, training, appraisal, and promotion. Age-inclusive organizations are likely to be better prepared for demographic change and more resilient overall.

VI. CONCLUSION

Promoting inclusion and wellbeing among older adults requires an organizational approach that combines age-friendly design, inclusive leadership, flexible work, and digital support. The PRISMA-based review process identified 42 records, included 7 studies, and showed that older adults benefit most when organizations adapt systems to their needs rather than expecting individuals to fit rigid structures. The most effective organizations are those that treat aging as a normal, valuable, and manageable part of the workforce.

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