

FAMILIES AND SOME ASPECTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL INTEGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY POSTMODERN SOCIETY

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Based on the theoretical and empirical results of intergenerational integration and relationships, the paper analyses key aspects of intergenerational relationships in the family and their impact on the well-being of older adults from the beginning of demographic changes, such as the increase in life expectancy, to the change in the age structure of the population worldwide. The analysis of different types of connections and relationships, solidarity, conflict and ambivalence, highlights all the complexity of interactions and the need for a flexible approach in studying and resolving their dynamics, forms of integration and intergenerational relationships, maintaining the mental health of older adults, emphasised on the importance of quality family relationships in ensuring security, purpose and connection. Based on the identified challenges, we propose strategies for improving relationships between older adults and their children, which highlight the importance of open communication, empathetic understanding, setting clear boundaries, cooperation and joint planning, support and solidarity, and seeking professional help. Proposed strategies, such as counselling and support practice, can lead to better outcomes in connecting generations, maintaining the mental health and quality of life of all family members, especially older adults, and promoting the integration of different generations in the family.

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1 Introduction

If modern society was characterized by informal intergenerational integration and cooperation, especially within the family, demographic changes forced us to start thinking at various levels about the need for integration and solidarity between generations, which is gaining more and more attention from the state, civil society, and experts. Intensive technological development, modernization, industrialization and social changes in the twentieth century and, last but not least, the emergence of artificial intelligence, have caused numerous changes in intergenerational relations, which have resulted in the loss of competence of the older generation in the field of integration and socialization of the younger generation, while intensifying, formalizing and professionalizing education. In addition to the many challenges of modern society, ranging from medical issues to social norms and values, the last few decades have also highlighted the intensive aging of the population, which represents one of the most important demographic changes in the history of humankind. The increase in the number of older adults is a global trend that has a profound impact on societies, economies, and health and social systems around the world. This phenomenon, also known as demographic aging, is the result of an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in the birth rate. Chan et al. also stated that with the increase in life expectancy worldwide, the elderly population will increase, which poses a significant challenge to global society.¹

Slovenia is also facing both an increase in the elderly population and a declining birth rate, which represents one of the significant demographic challenges, as the current birth rate does not ensure long-term stability. However, demographic change shows the need to develop integration policies that take into account the specific requirements of older adults. In 2024, Slovenia, like the rest of Europe, is facing significant demographic changes, but the population is expected to decline by 5 percent by 2070, from 2.1 million to 2 million.² Differences between generations are an important factor in shaping the satisfaction of the needs of different generational groups. Therefore, in line with the above, we highlight the importance of the dynamics of integration in intergenerational relationships in families and their impact on the well-being of older adults, especially in the context of modern demographic changes. Specific objectives include reviewing the theoretical and empirical

¹ Chan et al., 2010.

² Ageing Report, 2024.

foundations of relationships, such as bonding, solidarity, conflict and ambivalence, highlighting their role in maintaining the mental health of older adults, and identifying challenges and opportunities to support older adults and their families. In addition, on the basis of the identified challenges, we want to propose concrete proposals to improve intergenerational integration and relationships and promote harmony in the family, with an emphasis on open communication, empathy, support, and solidarity.

2 Relationships in the Family Between Generations in the Light of Extended Life Expectancy

The resulting explosion of aging has profound implications for society, nations, governments, and individuals, including families. In the last 50 years, life expectancy has also increased noticeably, which has led to significant changes in the age structure of the population, resulting in one generation being added to the average life expectancy, according to Bengston & Lowenstein, while in the last 300 years, civilizational changes have led to a decrease in mortality, resulting in a change in the age structure of the population.³ However, these questions are not confronted enough in Slovenian society, which makes it difficult to understand both aging and old age, one's own physicality, variability, and family relationships. The high level of social exclusion of older adults, poverty, which is higher after the age of 65, women are especially at risk, undervaluation of work in social care, the length of long-term care policy-making, etc., are just some of the indicators of how we actually understand old age in Slovenia. Young generations today invest in cryptocurrencies, while older adults have problems with how to diversify investments, where to invest their capital, how to organize a safe old age, how to overcome loneliness, and how to maintain social networks.

Since we define a generation as a group of individuals born in the same period, who have a common cultural context and whose collective work shapes a specific culture⁴, the study of generational theories allows for the analysis of the impact of social, cultural, political and economic conditions on the formation of identities, values and relationships within these generations. This, therefore, makes it possible to understand how each generation experiences and interprets aging according to its

³ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

⁴ Magano, 2020, after Campbell, 2015.

historical and social circumstances. Lüscher states that in an academic context, the definitions of the terms "generation" and "family" are intended to define their meaning clearly.⁵ Definitions that are upgraded according to social changes act as interpretive hypotheses that facilitate the understanding and exploration of phenomena. According to Janković, the term "family" means a type of social community that is individual, special, and unique.⁶ At the same time, Ljubetić is convinced that the family is "a universally social and inevitable part of human society".⁷ Elkind and Stacey⁸ define a family as "the primary emotional and social community of parents and their biological and/or adopted children who live together and uniquely perform their family functions".

In contrast, Giddens defines a family as "a small group of close-knit people who contribute, socialize, connect, and answer to each other."⁹ That is why the family is historically changeable, as well as generations, because both are constantly changing and adapting to modernity. One of the aspects of family change is the process of pluralization of forms and ways of life of the family in postmodern society. Goriup, on the other hand, defines the family as "the oldest, most enduring but also the most volatile social group."¹⁰

While the phenomenon of population ageing is well documented in industrialised societies as a result of a combination of better health, longer life expectancy, and reduced birth rates¹¹, in the 21st century, families as the smallest units of society face increasing challenges related to population ageing. Van Gaalen and Dykstra estimate that relationships between family members do not always move in a continuum between solidarity and more conflictual, but that solidarity and conflict are interconnected in specific ways.¹² Based on this, they found that the following can develop between generations:

⁵ Lüscher, 2003.

⁶ Janković, 2008.

⁷ Ljubetić, 2007, p. 5.

⁸ Elkind & Stacey, 1993, 1995, after Ljubetić, 2007, p. 5.

⁹ Giddens after Ljubetić, 2007, p. 6.

¹⁰ Goriup, 2005, p. 91.

¹¹ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

¹² Van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006, pp. 947–960.

- *harmonious relationships*, in which the likelihood of conflicts is very small, and relationships between children and parents are similar to relationships with friends;
- *ambivalent relationships*, in which there is an intense exchange of material support, accompanied by emotional burden, and we may also feel a greater presence of conflicts;
- *relationships of commitment* that do not deviate from support or conflict, especially the relationship of maintaining contact between generations;
- *favourable relationships* in which emotional support is present and other forms of exchange between generations are absent; and
- *disharmonious relationships* in which negative relationships between generations prevail.

Also, Silverstein and Bengtson¹³ have formulated a five-stage typology of intergenerational relationships between parents and children and related relationships between generations according to family types as:

- *close-knit relationships* characterised by strong integration and intergenerational solidarity, which is most commonly experienced by all generations in extended families;
- *isolated relationships* in which close connection and intergenerational solidarity are lacking, most often in isolated extended families;
- *social relationships in which solidarity is of varying intensity* according to individual dimensions, without a characteristic functional connection, but with other forms of solidarity, which most often develop in modified extended families;
- *intimate and distant relationships* that allow for different intensities of connection and solidarity, characterized by strong emotional and consensual solidarity (degree of convergence of values, attitudes, beliefs between family members), but without strong solidarity with respect to other dimensions;
- *relationships of duty*, with a transversal level of functional integration and solidarity, with relatively common forms of practical assistance and structural solidarity, but without emotional closeness and consensual solidarity.

¹³ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2019.

This (may) take place as a result of the pluralization of family forms and in response to an increasingly liberal view of family life, a more freely different sexual orientation, and perception of the human personality. It indicates the coexistence of different forms and ways of family life, which may be the result of one's own (stylistic) preferences or imposed by particular events or situations (e.g., divorce, extended families, etc.). Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, Miller & Driver note that in addition to families in which both parents are employed, there is also a change in the roles of grandparents. They are increasingly taking on parental roles, as in many cases, they become the primary caregivers of their grandchildren.¹⁴

Emotional closeness in the family is significant. Still, it does not necessarily exclude both connection and conflicts, because even the happiest families can be exposed to unpleasant circumstances and life-demanding situations (e.g., illnesses, injuries, etc.). Unhappy families are often accompanied by interpersonal unrest related to economic, political, and cultural changes and the search for meaning in society. On the other hand, happy families also experience stressful situations caused by social and family changes, but they can (may) be resistant to their negative impacts. To address these challenges, extended families often rely on a variety of strategies, such as religious practice, spirituality, or alternative social connections, when direct support within the family is not possible. The diversity and complexity of family structures, including divorce, remarriage, multiple (social) parents, ethnic, racial, and status diversity, and migration, are changing the modern structure of family life, making the study of these dynamics more challenging and interesting, especially for family sociologists and social gerontologists.

Although standard family models are more challenging to apply to this "new complexity," it opens up space to explore the changes and variations in family styles and well-being that result from these social changes.¹⁵ Lüscher also points out that family members who have the same socio-temporal status also share feelings, opinions and lifestyles, because they are (were) in the same period part of the same social unit as the extended family, in which the recognition of differences in relation to other family members takes place, since the identity of an individual or group is based on both specific personal and social characteristics.¹⁶

¹⁴ Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, Miller & Driver, 2000.

¹⁵ Silverstein & Giarrusso 2013.

¹⁶ Lüscher, 2003.

3 Intergenerational Integration in the Grip of Changed Population Dynamics

Due to the changes that have occurred, intergenerational relationships in modern society are increasingly important for family life. However, population dynamics resulting from birth rates, mortality, and migration movements are crucial for the formation of generational relationships in the family.¹⁷ Both the younger and older generations are subtle and (co)dependent social groups, as they depend on each other in their functioning, living, and providing for their living needs, as well as on each other. Therefore, the role of the middle generation is important, as it can (can) bring the generation of children (grandchildren) closer to the older generation (grandparents) so that they learn to understand, coexist and tolerate each other, to connect, strengthen interpersonal bonds, maintain contacts and a sense of need, coexistence, acceptance of traditions, different cultures and different values.

As current demographic changes have a noticeable impact on family dynamics, they require more years of "shared survival between generations" than at any other time in human history.¹⁸ This results in an increased number of elderly parents and grandparents, who can contribute to family stability¹⁹ and, as a "latent network", provide support to younger family members.²⁰ However, despite the positive aspects, the extension of the period of cohabitation also brings negative consequences, such as long-term care for dependent older adults and potential conflicts.²¹ In this context, intergenerational relationships become crucial to family life, whether it is providing support or resolving conflicts.²²

In the light of the pluralization of family forms, modern (otherwise different) families are faced with numerous changes in structure and roles, with a trend of increasing divorce and separation rates and the birth of children to single parents²³, which includes the associated pluralization of lifestyles and life courses, changing family values, and intrafamily differentiation. Therefore, the pluralization of family forms can be understood as a reaction to an increasingly liberal view of family life,

¹⁷ Lüscher, 2003.

¹⁸ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018 after Bengston, 1996; Goldscheider, 1990; Lowenstein, 2000.

¹⁹ Bengston & Lowenstein 2018 after Silverstein, Giarusso & Bengston, 1998.

²⁰ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

²¹ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018; Bengston, 2018 after Bengston, Rosenthal & Burton, 1995.

²² Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

²³ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

(different) sexual orientation and (individual) perception of human personality. It denotes the coexistence of different forms and ways of family life, which are (often) the result of one's own (stylistic) preferences or are imposed by certain events or conditions. In parallel, political and cultural developments shape family bonding and dynamics. However, the resulting changes require more intensive integration and adaptation of family roles and relationships in the light of better integration, support, and resources for all family members, especially the (oldest), even though the possibilities for family integration and home care for older adults are shrinking. However, Bengtson & Lowenstein and Bengtson & Harootyan²⁴ point out that in this context, the stereotype of older adults as a burden on either the national economy or the family is not proven (because not all older adults need support, and working-age family members do not always provide direct care to older adults. Research by Logan & Spitze²⁵, has shown that older adults attach great importance to the needs of younger generations and that the social norms that accompany older adults reflect their desire for autonomy and the role of parents to be supporters rather than recipients and not to become a burden to younger family members.²⁶

4 The Need for Intergenerational Integration and Solidarity

Intergenerational contacts and integration, which were a natural part of family life in modern society, are increasingly becoming the subject of various social and humanitarian programs of governmental and non-governmental organizations and civil society. However, at a time of increasingly pronounced demographic change, intergenerational integration, cooperation, and intergenerational solidarity are necessary to enable coexistence between generations. The simplest definitions of intergenerational integration and solidarity highlight the importance of "social cohesion between generations".²⁷ The key questions here are: what kind of integration and solidarity between which or what generations?

Intergenerational integration and solidarity are not only about helping (elderly) parents when they are no longer able to take care of themselves, but also not only about helping parents with their children when they are unable to accompany their

²⁴ Bengtson & Lowenstein, 2018; Bengtson & Harootyan, 1994.

²⁵ Logan & Spitze, 1995; according to Bengtson & Lowenstein, 2018.

²⁶ Bengtson & Lowenstein, 2018.

²⁷ Bengtson, Olander & Haddad, 1975; Katz, Lowenstein, Phillips & Daatland, 2005; Roberts, Richards & Bengtson, 1991.

child to or from kindergarten or school due to work obligations. The goals of intergenerational cohesion and solidarity are broader and have long-term implications for global society. According to Berčan²⁸, the goals of intergenerational integration and cooperation are:

- maintaining the autonomy and individuality of older adults; maintaining contact with family, neighbourhood, peers, and above all, members of the other two generations;
- ensuring access to information on everything important to older adults: forms and types of assistance to meet material and non-material social needs and protect their rights;
- development of older adults' self-confidence, a sense that they can (still) do something for their environment. But also for himself;
- the opportunity for older adults and young adults to learn to reflect on the moral and ethical dimensions of interpersonal relationships and social events, to develop positive moral and ethical concepts, organizational, communication and other social skills;
- experiencing the effectiveness of one's actions, as such experiences strengthen the personalities of both generations and activate them to take responsibility for their own lives.

It is interesting, however, that the need for such forms of integration and cooperation is advocated by the younger, middle, and older generations.

5 The Importance of Integration for Intergenerational Family Relationships

The debate on the generational question began in the mid-20th century due to the increase in life expectancy, changes in perceptions of aging and old age, and the increased role of the welfare state. The history of generational concepts can be divided into:

- In ancient times and the Middle Ages, to understand the present and the past in the light of tradition;

²⁸ Berčan, 2007, p. 46\201247.

- modernity, in which generation is used primarily to mark the transition to a new and open future and is seen as a generator of progress;
- a present marked by multiple choices, uncertainty, and doubt, as well as a focus on the past, which is reflected in the analyses of postmodernism.

Today, we understand intergenerational integration as a challenge to the individual and institutional formation of integration and coexistence, especially in the context of the debate on the renewal and progress of society. Lüscher in "Generationenbeziehungen in Familie und Gesellschaft" (2003) emphasizes that generational relationships are based on repetitive interactions, last for a specific period, and are subject to social contexts that shape, change or question them. Therefore, in parallel with the concept of generational relations, the author also emphasizes the importance of the concept of generational order, which shows that the formation of these relationships is not only a consequence of the spontaneous connection of individuals, since it often depends on social values, expectations, cultural ideas and legal regulations, as well as the understanding of the experience of birth and death as reference points that serve as a means of understanding the idea of time, with a special focus on the link between public, social, social, social and family generational experiences.

The etymology and history of the term contribute to a better understanding of the ideas associated with the concept of generation. Even in antiquity, the Greek word "genesis" and the Roman term "generatio" played an important role. The Greek term "genos" is derived from the verb "genesthai", which means to disappear, describing crossing the ever-changing threshold of life. In Roman antiquity, the term generation, translated from Greek, means origin, production, or reproduction, with an emphasis on the idea of creating something that is similar to itself in form, although individually different from its creator. Understanding generations has become a key component of the institutionalization of human coexistence, where the dynamic events described by the exchange of generations become reference points for rules, customs, and norms that transmit previous generations to new ones, especially in the family and family relationships. Lüscher also argues that the origin of the concept of generation in antiquity points to a fundamental tension that can be understood as a dichotomy, meaning that life arises from life, but parents and children differ. This paradox reflects the modern understanding of generations, where, despite their proximity, the differences and individuality of each generation

are recognized. The notion of generation reflects the ideas of continuity and cyclicity and represents processes that repeat themselves as natural, logical, and inevitable. Today, the concept of generation is still used as a metaphor for the process of creation and as a symbol of continuity in human coexistence, Lüscher is convinced.²⁹

The emphasis on intergenerational connectedness involves an analysis of social order, where social authority often derives from belonging to a particular age, with a specific focus on knowledge traditionally attributed to older adults.³⁰ In the past, age has been attributed to specific characteristics that have shaped generational affiliation as a critical element of the constitution of personal identity. However, this understanding was less individualistic than in postmodern society. Bengston's model theory of connection and solidarity, on the other hand, explores intergenerational relationships in the family, focusing in particular on feelings of connection, attachment, and exchange of services between different generations. Undeniably, older adults are noticeably pushed to the margins of social events, either because of their life situation, or when children move away and create their own families, or when they retire, they move away from the labor market, and when they are no longer interested in the areas in which they have been active for many years. Older adults are also often undesirable in political parties, except during election periods, even though their electoral votes can have a significant impact on the election outcome. However, the attachment and, isolation and loneliness of older adults can be explained because:

- it is society that isolates them, discriminates against them, excludes them, and corners them; and
- older adults themselves withdraw from social life, either because they feel that they are not wanted or because they find it challenging to come to terms with the changes that are happening in society and simply do not find their corner in it anymore.³¹

According to this model, family bonding and solidarity are not only the result of a biological connection or a common home, but the result of active processes of connection, interaction, support, and exchange between family members,

²⁹ Lüscher, 2003.

³⁰ Lüscher, 2002.

³¹ Pečjak, 2007.

highlighting the importance of family ties as key to maintaining stability and continuity in the family system.³² This is confirmed by the results of a 20-year study by Bengston and Lowenstein of three-generational families, that family feelings of kinship, solidarity, connection, affection and exchange of services, despite intense social changes, remain strong.³³ This is despite changes in family structure and socio-economic context, such as more frequent divorces and mass entry of women into the labour market, as well as increased levels of education for both sexes, as parents have maintained a high level of identity and constant connection and exchange with adult children. In another study, Bengston, Biblarz & Roberts explored how achievement orientations are formed in young people, including their educational and professional aspirations, values, and self-esteem.³⁴ These guidelines are considered traits that can be passed down from generation to generation in a family, thus promoting continuity over several decades. In this process, affective bonds between parent and child play a key role. Given the fact that Generation X is more likely to have parents with a university degree compared to the baby-boom generation, fewer siblings, a working mother, and having grown up in a separate household, it is important to compare these two generations compare in family solidarity and achievement orientation. The results showed that Generation X's achievement orientations were strikingly similar to those of their parents in the early years of life, nearly 30 years earlier. This proves that, despite changes in family structure and socio-economic context, intergenerational influences remain meaningful and robust.

6 Typology of Integration in Intergenerational Family Relationships

Intergenerational relationships represent a complex network of interactions and communication that reflects closeness and trust between parents and children.³⁵ This relationship is analysed in terms of solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence, given the multidimensional characteristics and structures of these relationships.³⁶ However, it is essential to emphasize that the quality of intergenerational relationships should not be judged solely on the basis of binary descriptions, but several aspects should

³² Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

³³ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

³⁴ Bengston, Biblarz & Roberts, 2002, after Bengston & Lowenstein 2018.

³⁵ Agandi Zhou et al., 2023.

³⁶ Zhou & Bai, 2022.

be considered, including contacts and interactions, similarities, emotional closeness, and conflict.³⁷

The diversity and complexity of different forms of intergenerational family relationships are the subject of much research, but the research of Silverstein & Bengtson is crucial.³⁸ By analyzing a nationally representative sample, the authors identified various possibilities for intergenerational family relationships:

- close-knit relationships characterised by strong integration and intergenerational solidarity, which is most commonly experienced by all generations in extended families;
- social relationships in which solidarity is of varying intensity according to individual dimensions, without a characteristic functional connection, but with other forms of solidarity, which most often develop in modified extended families;
- physically connected relationships characterised by high emotional closeness, frequent interaction and mutual assistance;
- social, intimate and distant relationships that allow for different intensities of connection and solidarity, characterized by strong emotional and consensual solidarity (degree of convergence of values, attitudes, beliefs between family members), but without strong solidarity with respect to other dimensions;
- isolated relationships in which close connection and intergenerational solidarity are lacking, most often in isolated extended families;
- relationships of duty, with a transversal level of functional integration and solidarity, with relatively frequent forms of practical assistance and structural solidarity, but without emotional closeness and consensual solidarity;
- a separate type of relationship that represents the other extreme with a low level of connection; and;
- alienated relationships, showing a connection with an average level of functional exchange, but a low level of emotional attachment.

³⁷ Zhou & Bai, 2022.

³⁸ Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997 after Bengtson & Lowenstein 2018.

Various authors point out that these results reveal significant differences in the distribution of bonding in family relationships, with relationships with mothers often being closer than with fathers, and relationships with fathers being more often prone to distance.

The paradigm approach of integration and intergenerational solidarity serves the relevant analysis of integration and relationships between generations, cohorts and age groups, which provides an exploration of integration, but also vulnerabilities in family relationships, intergenerational support, the role of grandparents, spirituality, migration and other social movements, globalization and modernization and industrialization in the light of the increasing presence of artificial intelligence.

Silverstein, Bengston et al. also investigated intergenerational integration and solidarity in paradigms of ambivalence and identified the importance of the complexity of emotional relationships between generations, both positive and negative.³⁹ An analysis of hidden classes conducted on a sample of 2,698 relationships between elderly parents and children in six developed countries (Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Norway, Spain, and the United States of America (Southern California)) identified four basic hidden classes that were differently distributed among countries, but showed an immutable metrological structure at the international level. The most common relationships in some countries were: friendly (in England), distant (Germany and Spain), incompatible (USA), and ambivalent (Israel). After adjusting for demographics, health, life circumstances, contacts, and support, these classes retained their relevance and specificity in each country. These findings complement the understanding of intergenerational relationships, provide deeper insights into the diversity and complexity of these relationships around the world, and confirm the importance of taking into account contextual differences when studying the interaction between older parents and children, emphasizing that family relationships cannot simply be generalized on a global scale.

7 Integration and Solidarity in Intergenerational Family Relationships

Intergenerational integration and solidarity encompass various forms of maintaining social cohesion in the family through emotional, behavioral, structural, and normative forms of integration.⁴⁰ Fundamental dimensions of solidarity include

³⁹ Silverstein, Bengston et al., 2010.

⁴⁰ Hwang et al., 2022, after Roberts et al., 1991.

affective proximity, frequency of contact, similarity of values, exchange of assistance, geographical proximity, and obligations of industry norms.⁴¹ Although some research has suggested the possibility of reducing these dimensions to a one-dimensional construction, empirical evidence makes this assumption. It points out that the criteria of association and solidarity dimensions are considered as relationship-oriented attributes.⁴² Studies have classified intergenerational relationships into different types, such as close-linked, distant, intimate, obligatory, and social, based on a combination of these traits.⁴³ These types of solidarity have been found in a variety of cultural contexts, including in Europe, Asian countries, and among American Chinese expatriates.⁴⁴

The construct of intergenerational integration in the light of solidarity at the family level is characterised by the behavioural and emotional dimensions of interaction, cohesion, emotion, and support between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren in long-term relationships. Bengtson & Schrader, Roberts, Richards & Bengtson⁴⁵ highlighted six conceptual dimensions of intergenerational integration and solidarity for measurement:

- emotional (feelings and assessments expressed by family members about their relationship with other members);
- pooled (type and frequency of contact between intergenerational family members);
- consensual solidarity (consensus on opinions, values and orientations between generations);
- functional (giving and receiving support between generations);
- normative (expectations about filial obligations and parental obligations and norms about the meaning of family values); and
- structural ("structure of opportunities" for intergenerational interaction, reflecting geographical proximity between family members).

⁴¹ Hwang et al., 2022.

⁴² Hwang et al., 2022, after Bengtson & Roberts, 1991.

⁴³ Hwang et al., 2022, after Silverstein et al., 1997.

⁴⁴ Hwang et al., 2022, after Dykstra & Fokkema, 2011; Steinbach, 2008; Guo et al., 2012; Yi & Lin, 2009; Li et al., 2019.

⁴⁵ Bengtson & Schrader, 1982; Roberts, Richards & Bengtson, 1991.

Szydlík⁴⁶ also investigated intergenerational integration and solidarity, classifying the factors of these into four categories, such as:

- structural opportunity (e.g., geographical proximity, cohabitation);
- the structure of needs (e.g., financial, health and emotional needs);
- family structure (family composition, social history, family roles);
- cultural-contextual structure (social, economic and tax system, state welfare, housing market, labour market, etc.).

Szydlík notes that emotional connection and solidarity are positively influenced by (greater) proximity to being.⁴⁷ Although the younger and older generations belong to the same group in terms of addiction, they depend on others, most often the middle generation, to connect, function, live and provide for their living needs, which brings children closer to the older generation so that they learn to understand, live and tolerate people who have different needs. This is especially important in the preschool period, because the youngest children are the most receptive to the fact that we can instill these values in them. This is also important for the older generation, as bonds are strengthened, contacts are maintained, and older people feel that they are still needed. It is important to maintain relationships between generations, and children are most often the link that connects, and at the same time, they learn to coexist, accept tradition, different cultures and otherness.⁴⁸ Research in the UK also suggests that children who already participate in intergenerational programmes have a more positive view of the older population than those children who do not yet participate in the programme.⁴⁹ Also, transfers in the family depend on the occasion (e.g., whether the parents have the money to (re)pass it on to their children) and needs (unemployed schooling children receive more financial transfers). Socio-economic status is therefore seen as an important factor for intergenerational solidarity. Similarly, Bengtson & Roberts (1991) state that there is a correlation between normative solidarity (the degree of commitment to family norms and family obligations, the performance of family roles and the fulfilment of family obligations) and affection, as the latter has a positive effect on the connection or frequency of contact between parents and children. Structural solidarity, such as

⁴⁶ Szydlík, 2008, p. 97.

⁴⁷ Szydlík, 2008, p. 97.

⁴⁸ Arko, Goričan & Kovač, 2011.

⁴⁹ Heyman, 2011.

geographical proximity, and good parental health increase the frequency of contact between parents and adult children.

Szydlík (2008) also singled out the characteristics of the family as an important factor. Lawton et al. and Silverstein et al. point out that (albeit different) research has shown noticeable differences in intergenerational integration and solidarity depending on the gender of the parent and the sex of adult children, as well as according to the status of the parent – divorced and married.⁵⁰ As they note, the motivation to help elderly parents varies between daughters and sons. Therefore, they point out that daughters offer more support in the case of greater emotional attachment, and sons in the case of a greater amount of contact. Silverstein & Bengtson⁵¹ also note that the influence of parental gender influences adult children to be more often associated with mothers than with fathers, which is also confirmed by Szydlík⁵², who also points to the strong connecting role of women, since mother-daughter relationships are usually stronger and more stable; Parrot & Bengtson⁵³, on the significant impact of family relationship histories on intergenerational integration and solidarity. Past relationships of intense emotional connection between parents and children are more often reciprocal and therefore there is a greater likelihood of receiving and giving different forms of support and help to each other.

Closely related to the composition of the family are various normative approaches to the custodial role, which Pyke & Bengtson⁵⁴ point out when they cite two different family typologies of care, namely:

- individualistic families, in which care is minimized and mainly within the framework of formal services; and
- collectivist families, in which care is distributed among all family members and is supposed to be a form of establishing family bonds and solidarity.

The paradigm of intergenerational integration and solidarity, which represents a comprehensive scheme for describing intergenerational relationships, has been the basis for most research on family intergenerational relationships in the last four

⁵⁰ Lawton et al., 1994; Silverstein et al., 1995.

⁵¹ Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997.

⁵² Szydlík, 2008.

⁵³ Parrot & Bengtson, 1999.

⁵⁴ Pyke & Bengtson, 1996.

decades.⁵⁵ This paradigm, although originally developed and validated by data collected in the United States, is widely used around the world, including in countries such as Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Canada.⁵⁶ Also, theoretical and empirical advances in the social psychology of small-group cohesion, such as the models of Heider⁵⁷ and Homans⁵⁸, contributed to the development of the initial model of intergenerational solidarity (after Silverstein and Bengtson). This model identified six basic elements of solidarity: emotional proximity, social contact, geographical distance, supportive behaviour, filial obligations, and consensual relationships.⁵⁹

Therefore, this paradigm remains the gold standard as a model for measuring bonding and intergenerational relationships, especially in terms of emotional connection.⁶⁰ Based on this model, researchers have attempted to include conflict as a seventh dimension, which has led to the development of a paradigm of solidarity and conflict.⁶¹ However, this additional dimension has sparked debates about whether bonding, affection, and conflict can coexist in intergenerational relationships and whether conflict is constantly at odds with bonding and emotional solidarity. Therefore, while Bengtson's model of intergenerational connection and solidarity is criticized for focusing only on the positive aspects of relationships between parents and adult children and for ignoring conflicts, at the same time, we find that his updated model also includes conflicts that may result from the potential negative effects of (excessive) solidarity. Conflict in this model is perceived as a permanent and dynamic part of family relationships.⁶² However, Szydlik emphasizes that conflict does not necessarily mean the absence of integration and solidarity (and vice versa), and solidarity does not necessarily imply the absence of conflict, because it can arise from the very mode of integration and solidarity.⁶³ Thus, for adult children, caring for adult parents can be stressful, and for older adults, negative emotions due to the loss of autonomy.

⁵⁵ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁵⁶ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁵⁷ Heider, 1958.

⁵⁸ Homans, 1950.

⁵⁹ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁶⁰ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁶¹ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁶² Albertini et al., 2007.

⁶³ Szydlik, 2008.

8 The Problem of Lack of Intergenerational Connection, Contacts and Communication

In modern, postmodern society, we are witnessing the most significant generational gap today between the generation of grandparents (baby boomers, fewer veterans) and the generation of (great) grandchildren. Intergenerational differences arise due to the processes of intensive modernization and globalization, as well as progress in society, which can also be negative for society. The middle generation is the link between the two generations, as it can prevent older adults from becoming lonely by establishing a proper connection between grandparents and grandchildren. This is very important for both generations, especially in these relationships. We can learn about tolerance and respect because postmodern society values vitality, well-being, and a healthy lifestyle. Older adults also want to stay vital for as long as possible, and we must accept the fact that they are aging and living accordingly. A person performs special tasks during all periods, which he also has in his later years. Stielrin⁶⁴ talks about the family task of inviting the older adult to remain involved in the family in some special and unique way. "A long string of delegation means that we stay connected to our parents, generations throughout our lives." All generations need the past in the present, but for the future, which in turn requires integration, solidarity, dialogue and cooperation.

In terms of intergenerational integration, older parents have more interaction with children with whom they live or who live closer to them, the further south they are located on the European continent, note Silverstein & Bengston⁶⁵, as well as that the involvement of adult children in the care of elderly parents is usually voluntary in the social democratic countries of northern Europe than in the countries of southern Europe, where parental involvement is usually mandatory. Therefore, older parents in countries with more advanced social welfare systems may also experience fewer conflicts with their children than in countries with weaker social policies, even though older parents show more affection and produce more conflict due to greater involvement and dependence on adult children. The family's ability to cope with the bonding of family members with conflicts arising from obligations and caregiving actually affects the quality of care and the quality of the relationship between the members of the extended family. However, the dimensions of integration, solidarity,

⁶⁴ Čačinovič-Vogrinič, 2000.

⁶⁵ Silverstein & Bengston, 2010, after Hank, 2007; Brandt et al., 2009.

and conflict do not constitute a single continuum of them. Intergenerational integration and solidarity can show both a high level of connectedness and solidarity as well as a high level of conflict or a low level of connectedness and solidarity, or a low level of connectedness and latency of conflict, depending on family dynamics and circumstances.⁶⁶

9 Ambivalence in Intergenerational Family Relationships

Historically, ambivalence has been present in family relationships between parents and children since the beginning of human society, as evidenced by mythological stories and contemporary literature. However, the term "ambivalence" supposedly first appeared only in 1910.⁶⁷ Given that the family life of different generations is based on the tension between the desire for autonomy and the need for interdependence, it is not surprising that intergenerational relationships in extended family life are among the most ambivalent social relations⁶⁸, which indicates the complexity and contradictions that can arise between generations. The concept of ambivalence in intergenerational family relationships requires a deeper understanding of the complexity of human interactions. Sociologists have extended this concept of linking conflict and ambivalence as an intrinsic feature of human relationships, given their complexity and irreconcilable demands.⁶⁹ In contemporary postmodern society, intergenerational ambivalence, which is the result of various forms of family life and sources of stress, is becoming increasingly important. Von Humbolt et al.⁷⁰ explored this topic on 424 older participants aged 65 to 97 years. They found that the dimensions of bonding, support, and conflict in relationships between older adults and their adults unfold as the quality of interaction between older adults and adult children, family integration, care and support, boundary definition, distance and alienation, and communication difficulties. In any case, the diversity of experiences in old age regarding intergenerational relationships and the conflicting expectations of older adults in relation to their adult children should not be overlooked, because ambivalence can also be understood as a "sensory concept"

⁶⁶ Bengston & Lowenstein, 2018.

⁶⁷ Lüscher, 2002.

⁶⁸ Silverstein & Bengston, 2010, after Fingerman, Hay & Birditt, 2004.

⁶⁹ Silverstein & Bengston, 2010, after Merton & Barber, 1963.

⁷⁰ Von Humbolt et al., 2021.

as defined by Blumer⁷¹, because it gives its "user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical cases".

Emotional closeness in intergenerational relationships between older adults and their children is defined as a positive feeling or solidarity.⁷² This closeness is manifested in intimacy, good mutual understanding, and the provision of financial support and gifts, which are traditional expectations in filial commitment.⁷³ Previous research has shown that intimate emotional relationships between older adults and children, receiving financial support, and closeness in the living space are associated with lower rates of depression and better psychological well-being in older adults.⁷⁴ A study by Zhou & Bai⁷⁵ found that the quality of intergenerational relationships is crucial to meeting the social and emotional needs of older people, as well as their mental health. This research highlights the importance of emotional closeness and support in intergenerational relationships for the mental health and well-being of older adults, highlighting the need to foster quality interactions between generations to prevent mental health problems and improve overall well-being.⁷⁶ Research also shows the importance of emotional closeness and support in the extended family for healthy aging of older adults⁷⁷, as communication between generations allows (primarily) older adults to (often re)find their life meaning, satisfaction, and happiness.⁷⁸ At the same time, the lack (e.g., financial, emotional, physical, household chores, personal hygiene, etc.) of children's help can cause depressed moods, feelings of loneliness, and fear in older adults.⁷⁹ Agandi Zhou et al.⁸⁰ believe that financial and instrumental support represent key forms of intergenerational support, with each playing a specific role in intergenerational communication. Financial support is manifested through financial transfers between generations, often as a sign of respect for older adults. Huang & Fu, however, add that this increases their sense of happiness, as receiving financial support from children is crucial for overcoming financial obligations, as well as high healthcare costs and daily

⁷¹ Blumer, 1969.

⁷² Zhou & Bai, 2022, after der Pers et al., 2015.

⁷³ Zhou & Bai, 2022, after Chong et al. 2016.

⁷⁴ Zhou & Bai, 2022, after Li & Zhang, 2019; Fu & Ji, 2020.

⁷⁵ Zhou & Bai, 2022.

⁷⁶ Zhou & Bai, 2022, after Agandi Zhou et al., 2023.

⁷⁷ Agandi Zhou et al., 2023, after Merz et al., 2010.

⁷⁸ Agandi Zhou et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2022.

⁷⁹ Agandi Zhou et al., 2023; Iecovich et al., 2002.

⁸⁰ Agandi Zhou et al., 2023.

needs.⁸¹ Instrumental support for children, on the other hand, is the help provided by adult children in the institute of the household. Agandi Zhou et al., on the other hand, warn that intergenerational integration and relationships may decrease due to (gradual) dysfunction of the older adults.⁸²

Many authors point out the problem of emotional dissonance that may develop between members of an extended family, because intergenerational ambivalence in later life is more common in relationships in which older parents are submissive and in poorer health, because they become dependent on the adult children they once cared for.⁸³ This was followed by Connidis & McMullin⁸⁴ and developed the term "structural ambivalence" to refer to relational ambivalence caused by institutional forces, with competing requirements for family members' resources, which can result in a conflict of roles (e.g., between roles in an extended family).

10 The Impact of Older Adult Choice on Intergenerational Family Relationships

The rapidly increasing trend of population ageing and the serious consequences of ageing have prompted reflection on risk factors for choosing family life and connecting with close family members. A postmodern view of aging provides a new framework for understanding this process, shifting the focus from aging as a biomedical phenomenon, often understood as physical decline and disease⁸⁵, to the prolongation and quality of life in old age. Such an approach emphasizes more positive approaches to aging, focused on enjoying life despite old age. Zhou & Bai, Mueller et al. and Vyas & Okereke state that these include psychosocial, emotional, behavioural, and physiological factors, which are most reflected at the global level of society.⁸⁶ Individual older adults choose their way of life, what they will give up and what they will accept, which in turn changes solidarity as it has been in modern society. Also, because there are fewer and fewer older adults living with younger generations, this also changes their relationships if they do not live together with younger generations. Given the ubiquity of postmodern values, social changes are

⁸¹ Huang & Fu, 2021.

⁸² Agandi Zhou et al., 2023.

⁸³ Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010; Fingerman, Chen, Hay, Cichy & Lefkowitz, 2006; Willson, Shuey et al., 2003; Willson, Shuey, Elder & Wickrama, 2006.

⁸⁴ Connidis & McMullin, 2002; Silverstein & Bengtson, 2010.

⁸⁵ Powell, 2022.

⁸⁶ Zhou & Bai, 2022; Mueller et al., 2020; Vyas & Okereke, 2020.

important, such as changing traditional approaches in life and choices. However, there is an increasingly noticeable shift from economic achievements to quality of life, to greater freedom in lifestyle choices and self-expression.⁸⁷

An important factor influencing the satisfied mental well-being of older adults is the choice of the way of family bonding, life, and the quality of intergenerational relationships with children, because these relationships play a key role in shaping the mental health of older adults.⁸⁸ The choice of family life for older adults may presuppose harmonious relationships between parents and adult children. Still, it does not guarantee them, as the choice can be a burden, a concern and a source of confusion for them. Decisions as a result of choice are increasingly difficult for older adults to make, either for their well-being or for the well-being of those close to them. In the ideology of choice, they are faced with an infinite possibility of choices, which are (often) illusory, often even traumatic for them, because they want their choice to be ideal for everyone, so that the social space accepts their choice, to maintain good relations with all those involved, so that they can actually choose freely, and not under the "silent" pressure of family members, who have "already chosen for them" and that their decisions and ambitions would be theirs.

The ideology of choice has penetrated deep into older adults' understanding that they "have to do something" – in light of expectations and for the benefit of younger generations. Often this is not their (original) choice, because they feel "guilty", which they feel when they "look for the optimal choice for everyone involved", so they try to find a way to influence their own choice and their children's desires. They are often angry because, as Salecl states, their "choice often paradoxically requires the denial of their desires, even their needs and beliefs and values," which psychoanalysis understands as an essential mechanism by which older adults deal with their internal conflicts."⁸⁹ Not unpreparedness, but predictability, was the basis of the value orientation of generations of veterans and baby boomers in intergenerational integration, cooperation, and solidarity, experienced in their youth, when as children they found themselves at the same crossroads of their youth in relation to their parents in modern society. That is why, above all, they see immovable property as something that keeps them from poverty, loneliness, even illness and weakness.

⁸⁷ Inglehart, 2020.

⁸⁸ Zhou & Bai, 2022; Fi & J, 2020; Lai et al., 2019; Li & Zhang, 2019.

⁸⁹ Salecl, 2011, p. 35.

Therefore, their choice inspires them with fascination and at the same time with fear, anxiety, and even horror.

11 The Importance of Connection, Support, and Quality Relationships in Old Age

Taking into account a comprehensive analysis of demographic trends and research on intergenerational relationships and their impact on the mental health of older people, the importance of support and quality relationships in old age stands out, which are not only related to emotional support, but also include complex mechanisms of connection, exchange, reciprocity, and shared concerns. Understanding the importance of connection, support, and quality relationships in old age provides deeper insight into the ways in which an extended family can positively impact the well-being of older members.

Emotional closeness and support in daily activities create a sense of meaning and purpose, which is important for maintaining a positive mental state in old age. Financial support, which can manifest itself in the form of cash transfers or the provision of basic needs, provides stability and security to older adults. Feeling financially and materially supported by the family reduces stress and anxiety and allows older adults to focus on maintaining their quality of life and taking care of their health. On the other hand, instrumental support, which includes practical assistance with daily activities such as household chores or shopping, alleviates the physical and logistical challenges faced by older people. This type of support allows them to remain active in their communities and maintain a sense of autonomy.

It is important to emphasize that support and quality relationships in the family are not just one-way. Reciprocity in relationships where support is shared between different generations builds a sense of community and mutual trust. This is important not only for the emotional well-being of older adults but also for strengthening overall family dynamics and cohesion.

Therefore, the promotion of quality intergenerational relationships and support in the family is becoming a necessity in modern society. It is important to continuously invest in strengthening intergenerational solidarity, to promote open communication and exchange of support, and to provide resources and programmes that promote

the maintenance of family ties and quality intergenerational relationships. Educating about the importance of intergenerational support, promoting open dialogue within the family, and providing the means to develop quality relationships are key steps in ensuring happy and fulfilling aging. This holistic perspective highlights the importance of the family as a fundamental pillar of support in the ageing process. It highlights the need for continuous investment in maintaining family values and intergenerational ties.

12 New Challenges and Opportunities for Integration in Intergenerational Relationships of Older Adults in the Family

Recognizing the key challenges that older people face in their relationships with children is an important step in understanding the complexity of intergenerational dynamics. While older generations grew up in a society that emphasized traditional values driven by duty and a humble life⁹⁰, younger generations, including Generation Z, are growing up in a globalized world marked by rapid technological development and mobility.⁹¹ These generational differences in perceptions of ageing shape intergenerational relationships, as for young people, ageing can be associated with the challenges posed by fast-paced lifestyles and technologies, and older generations often learn to live in an increasingly digitalised world, which requires a change in their attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, a postmodern perspective on ageing allows for a deeper understanding of these changes and provides a basis for developing policies and measures that can respond to the specific needs of older people in a digitalised society.

Therefore, it is important to recognize these challenges for several reasons. Intergenerational relationships often serve as a key support and source of emotional connection for older and younger family members. Understanding the challenges that seniors face in these relationships allows for better adjustments and strengthening of family bonds. These relationships have a profound impact on the overall well-being of the family and can provide a sense of belonging, support, and security.

⁹⁰ Slagsvold & Hansen, 2021.

⁹¹ Johnson & Bonner, 2022.

The identification of key challenges enables the timely identification of the needs of older people in the context of family relationships. This allows for the development of tailored support programmes and interventions that aim to improve the quality of these relationships and ensure the well-being of all involved. For example, suppose a lack of communication between older parents and children is recognized. In that case, programs can be developed that promote open and honest communication to resolve misunderstandings and improve emotional connection. Also, what often leads to new challenges in intergenerational relationships is changes in family structures and social standards. Identifying these challenges helps to understand trends and adapt approaches to respond to new needs and dynamics. More and more intergenerational families are facing challenges arising from different values and cultural and social aspects, and this harmonious family life requires connection, understanding, and adaptation. Appropriate intergenerational relationships have a significant impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of all family members. Recognizing the challenges enables everyone to reduce stressful situations, conflicts, and other negative consequences in order to provide the necessary and targeted support for healthier, satisfied intergenerational relationships with an inclusive and supportive environment for all generations in the family.

13 Generational Partiality: the Dynamics of Intergenerational Integration

The most common challenges of older adults in their relationships with adult children in intergenerational integration and solidarity are the complex dynamics that shape family interactions and relationships, as they arise from generational partiality, which they perceive as differences in integration and solidarity between them. Older parents (may) face the challenges of generational partiality by not appreciating and acknowledging their children's contributions and experiences, ignoring their advice, opinions in making important life decisions, etc., which makes them feel that they are not respected, valued or even ignored.

Although longitudinal studies show a high degree of affective solidarity between generations, it has been found that:

- Older respondents are more likely to report a higher level of solidarity than younger generations. This generational bias can affect the perception and experience of relationships and potentially lead to tension and misunderstandings, which can further reinforce the feeling of insufficient support or understanding of older adults by their children in the aging process (e.g., when an older parent wants to maintain a high level of autonomy and independence, but feels limited or undervalued by the assumptions or stereotypes that their adult children have about their abilities), which can cause a particular challenge is the divergence of expectations and needs between older parents and their adult children, when older parents strive to maintain traditional forms of solidarity in the family, such as more frequent contact or mutual assistance, and adult children often try to reconcile these obligations with their life priorities and obligations, which requires finding a compromise and adapting;
- the diversity of forms of intergenerational integration and solidarity (e.g., emotional closeness, frequency of contact, exchange of help and similarity of values, etc.) can pose a challenge in mutual understanding and adaptation, because older parents and adult children have different priorities and preferences when it comes to types of support and forms of connection in the family, which can lead to misunderstandings and mismatches, conflicts and disappointments (e.g., older parents want more practical help and cooperation their children in their daily activities, while adult children may prefer to express emotional support or provide financial assistance);
- the inclusion of conflict as an additional dimension in the paradigm of intergenerational integration and solidarity draws attention to different types of interactions (e.g., affection and conflict), as they affect the stability and quality of relationships. Conflict can be inherent in intergenerational relationships, but its presence can cause stress and tension, especially if it is not adequately resolved or managed. Situations often arise in which elderly parents and adult children disagree on important family issues, such as caring for elderly family members or dividing the inheritance. A lack of understanding or compromise in resolving these conflicts can lead to deepening tensions and weakening family bonds;
- finding a balance between the expectations of older parents and the needs of adult children. As older parents age, they face a variety of physical and mental changes, as well as challenges that may require more support and care from

- their adult children. When they are more dependent on their children's help to carry out daily activities or provide medical care. However, adult children may not be willing or able to provide the necessary care due to their obligations, limitations or lack of resources;
- older parents and adult children may struggle with changing roles and responsibilities in the family. While older parents have traditionally been the bearers of authority and care in the family, roles change as older parents become more vulnerable or dependent on their children's help, which can cause insecurity or discomfort, both in older parents, who may feel helpless due to the loss of autonomy, and in adult children, who may feel overwhelmed by new responsibilities.

Older adults face a series of challenges in relationships with adult children that arise from the concept of ambivalence, focusing on the mixed positive and negative emotions that may be present in these interactions. One of the key challenges is the profound emotional dissonance that can arise from intergenerational ambivalence, where older parents and adult children can feel both attraction and rejection for each other at the same time. In this context, a challenge can be identified, which lies in the lack of understanding and empathy between a similar challenge relates to the conflict between the desire for autonomy and the need for interdependence within the family. Especially if the elderly parent lives alone, has limited mobility, wants to maintain their independence and control over their life, and finds it difficult to perform daily tasks (e.g., shopping, paying money orders, etc.). But, even if an adult child wants to help them, the adult child may experience a rejection of the help offered, leading to disappointment for the child on the one hand and the elderly parent, who is worried about the ability to control and the loss of their independence.

14 Final Thoughts

Demographic change, characterised by increasing life expectancy and changes in the age structure of the population, poses key challenges for families and society as a whole. In the context of these changes, intergenerational relationships are becoming increasingly important and have a direct impact on the stability and well-being of family life. The analysis of different types of intergenerational integration and relationships, such as solidarity, conflict and ambivalence, reveals the diversity and complexity of these interactions, ranging from intense emotional proximity to

distance, and the importance of taking into account contextual differences, including social, cultural and economic specificities, highlights the need for a flexible approach to the study and treatment of intergenerational dynamics.

Intergenerational relationships also play a key role in maintaining the mental health and well-being of older people, as quality family relationships that include emotional, financial, and instrumental support provide a sense of security, purpose, and connection as key components of happy and fulfilling ageing. An emphasis on reciprocity in relationships and the promotion of open dialogue and exchange of support within the family are essential to ensure intergenerational solidarity and quality ageing, and education on the importance of family and community support in maintaining family values is a key step in ensuring the optimal well-being of older people in modern society. Recognizing significant challenges in intergenerational relationships, such as generational bias, divergence of expectations and needs, ambivalence, and the impact of filial norms, is crucial to understanding the complexity of these relationships, as understanding these dynamics allows for the development of targeted support strategies that promote harmonious and satisfactory intergenerational relationships and contribute to the overall well-being of the family and society.

Among the reasons why there could be more conflict and a reduction in the age group in integration and generational solidarity by 2030, we highlight the increase in:

- dependency relationships. Declining birth rates mean fewer workers will be available to support aging adults;
- perceptions of "generational inequality", because if inflation continues to intensify, older adults are increasingly likely to be perceived as "greedy geezers", as public support for older adults comes from funds that could be allocated to younger generations.

Also, ageism will negatively perpetuate stereotypes that see the elderly as rigid, terribly old-fashioned, incapable, irrelevant, and worthless because more of the elderly population lives in the past, with mental disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, heart attacks, strokes, etc.), which will define the perception of aging as inherently negative. Also, because technological progress is becoming more and more a part of the personal lives of older adults, as many people cannot or do not want to adapt to

new techniques. However, due to the decline in the birth rate, the young generation will be increasingly valued and attention will be focused on young people, including at the expense of older adults. Nevertheless, the research results point to the continuation of the relatively high level of integration and solidarity between macrogens that characterize Western societies after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Therefore, in addition to the strategies already in place, new ones are needed to improve integration in the light of satisfied relationships between older adults and their children, which will enable a structured approach that is based on open communication, empathic understanding, setting clear boundaries, flexibility and adaptability, cooperation and joint planning, support and solidarity, and seeking professional help. These strategies will promote deeper awareness, connection, and harmony in the family, ensure the long-term stability and well-being of all family members, and promote adaptation to change and strengthen the resilience of family relationships in modern postmodern society. Incorporating these strategies into counseling, therapy, and supportive practices will allow for better mental health and quality of life for all family members, with a particular focus on older adults.

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