

THE INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRANDPARENTS AND GRANDCHILDREN: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

A relação intergeracional entre o avós e netos: revisão integrativa

Relación intergeracional entre abuelos y nietos: revisión integrativa

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study's main purpose has been to underline scientific publications addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. **Methods:** It is an integrative literature review. Data collection took place through five databases as follows: CINAHL, Web of Science, Scopus, MEDLINE and LILACS. Furthermore, the following descriptors were used: Elderly; Intergenerational Relationship; Grandparents; preschool children, as well as: *Idoso; Relação Intergeracional; Avós; Escolares.* **Results:** Based on this approach, the final sample was comprised by 23 articles. **Conclusion:** The relationship between elderly people and children was found to have a positive impact on both maintaining autonomy and independence in some activities, keeping up the cognitive and motor level, and influencing socialization as well.

Descriptors: Elderly, Intergenerational relationship, Grandparents, Schooling age children.

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Evidenciar as publicações científicas sobre a relação intergeracional entre avós e netos. **Método:** Trata-se de uma revisão integrativa e para a coleta dos dados foram definidas cinco bases de dados: Cinahl, Web of Science, Scopus, MedLine e Lilacs. Também, foram utilizados os descritores: Elderly; Intergenerational Relations; Grandparents; preschool children e os descritores: Idoso; Relação Intergeracional; Avós; Escolares. **Resultados:** A partir dessa exposição a amostra final ficou integrada por 23 artigos incluídos na revisão. **Conclusão:** A relação entre a pessoa idosa e a criança, pode refletir positivamente na manutenção da autonomia e independência em algumas atividades, manter o nível cognitivo e motor, influenciar na socialização.

Descritores: Idoso, Relação Intergeracional, Avós, Escolares.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Destacar las publicaciones científicas sobre la relación intergeneracional entre abuelos y nietos. **Método:** Se trata de una revisión integradora y para la recolección de datos se definieron cinco bases de datos: Cinahl, Web of Science, Scopus, MedLine y Lilacs. Además, se utilizaron los descriptores: Anciano; Relaciones intergeneracionales; Abuelos; niños en edad preescolar y los descriptores: Anciano; Relación intergeneracional; Abuelos; Colegio. **Resultados:** A partir de esta exposición, la muestra final fue integrada por 23 artículos incluídos en la revisión. **Conclusión:** La relación entre el anciano y el niño puede reflejarse positivamente en el mantenimiento de la autonomía e independencia en algunas actividades, manteniendo los niveles cognitivo y motor, influyendo en la socialización.

Descritores: Anciano, Relación intergeneracional, Abuelos, Colegio.

INTRODUCTION

The aging process can cause feelings of fear and insecurity, then generating isolation from society; consequently, it is important to encourage the relationship between elderly and young people. This relationship can bring benefits to both generations, as the young person learns from the elderly's experience and he/she remains inserted in society, receiving from the young people the news of the present-day world.¹

The avidity is singular, based on living with other generations, including those of family ties; therefore, this relationship is observed today and more intensely in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, because in the current context grandparents play the role of caregivers, or even exercise the role of father or mother.²

In Brazil, 51% of elderly people live with children, 22% only with a spouse, 14% with other people who are not related, and only 13% live alone. What is expected for 2030 is that 2.1 billion of the world's elderly population live with children, and today, approximately 1 billion elderly people live directly with children in their homes.³

Hence, it is possible to identify a change in household arrangements, with respect to the number of members and generations among them. A determining factor for this is the economic need, which elderly people help other family members, considering they often have better financial stability.⁴ There were identified feelings of satisfaction and

affection felt in living with elderly people, demonstrating positivity in this regard, then reaffirming the importance of the relationship between different generations.⁵

This work addresses the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, using the integrative literature review method, targeting to systematize the existing knowledge concerning the subject. The aim of this study was to underline scientific publications addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The results found are of paramount importance to society, as well as values the Gerontological Education.

METHODS

It is an integrative literature review addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The following steps were taken, a) establishment of the research question, which includes the definition of the study objectives; b) literature search, with the establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria; c) categorization of studies, with the database formation; d) assessment of the studies included in the review; e) results interpretation; e) summary of knowledge or presentation of the integrative literature review.⁶

So, the following guiding question was elaborated to guide the integrative literature review: What are the scientific evidences addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren?

Databases were defined as follows: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Web of Science, Scopus, Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (MEDLINE), Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde (LILACS) [Latin American & Caribbean Health Sciences Literature]. Moreover, the following descriptors indexed in the Medical Subject Headings (MESH) were used: Elderly; Intergenerational Relationships; Grandparents; preschool children and Descritores em Ciências da Saúde (DECS) [Health Sciences Descriptors]: Idoso; Relação Intergeracional; Avós; Escolares. The searches took place from May and June 2020.

The inclusion criteria defined were as follows: a) being published as a scientific article; b) being available in full-text article; c) being published from 2010 to 2019; d) addressing the theme of the intergenerational relationship between elderly people and children; e) answering the guiding question; f) having an abstract published in Portuguese, English or Spanish and g) being indexed in at least one of the referenced databases.

The exclusion criteria were designated from publications that were not full-text articles; repeated publications in the databases or those that were not relevant to the research theme, or the manuscripts classified as letters to the

editor of the magazine or periodical, theses, dissertations, monographs, books, manuals and abstracts.

Given the aforesaid, the sample selection was composed initially by 1,127 results, minus the value of 430, after removing the duplicate articles, then 536 was excluded after having applied the filters of the inclusion criteria already mentioned. Thereby, 161 articles remained for eligibility, 138 being excluded for not answering the guiding question, and for not being related to the interest of the work so that the final sample was integrated by 23 articles included in the review, as shown in **Figure 1**. The diagram collaborated so that the studies included in the review were better categorized, together with the data interpretation.

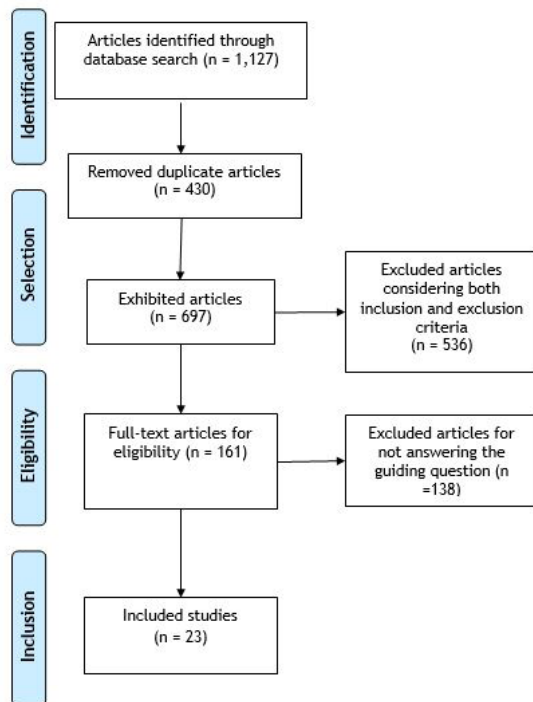


Figure 1: Flowchart addressing the articles' selection process for the integrative literature review, João Pessoa city, Paraíba State, Brazil, 2020.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the stage of categorizing the studies, an instrument was used to record the data, targeting to organize the information obtained according to the elements available in the articles' identification. A summary table was elaborated, which included the following information: title; journal; country of publication; year and target audience, according to Table 1.

Table 1: Overall characteristics of the articles found in the databases, João Pessoa city, Paraíba State, Brazil, 2010-2019. (N=23)

No.	Title	Journal	Country	Year	Target audience
01	Association between caring for grandchildren and feelings of loneliness, social isolation and social network size: a cross-sectional study of community dwelling adults in Germany ⁷	Public health	Germany	2019	1,125 grandparents
02	Three-generation households and child mental health in European countries ⁸	Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology volume	Europe	2019	4,582 children
03	Physical and mental health of Chinese grandparents caring for grandchildren and great-grandparents ⁹	Social Science & Medicine	China	2019	Database
04	Grandparenting from a distance: experiences of nursing home residents ¹⁰	Journal Educational Gerontology	Europe	2018	8 grandparents
05	Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Intergenerational Relationship Quality Scale for Aging Chinese Parents ¹¹	The Gerontologist	China	2018	1,001 individuals
06	O avô e a avó na visão dos netos ¹²	Revista Kairós Gerontologia	Brazil	2017	6 grandparents and their grandchildren
07	Perceptions of a Specific Family Communication Application among Grandparents and Grandchildren: An Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model ¹³	Journal. pone.	Italy	2016	39 grandchildren and 39 grandparents
08	The impact of caring for grandchildren on the health of grandparents in Europe: A lifecourse approach ¹⁴	Social Science & Medicine	England	2016	Grandparents
09	Daily life and stress of grandmothers of children with disabilities and of grandmothers of children with typical development ¹⁵	Estud. Interdiscipl. envelhec., Porto Alegre.	Brazil	2015	12 grandparents
10	Intergenerational Group Reminiscence: A Potentially Effective Intervention to Enhance Elderly Psychosocial Wellbeing and to Improve Children's Perception of Aging ¹⁶	Educational Gerontology	Italy	2014	32 elderly people and 114 children
11	An investigation of the needs of grandparents who are raising grandchildren ¹⁷	Child & Family Social Work	Australia	2014	61 non-relative caregivers and 53 informal grandparent caregivers. 180 children living with foster parents and 78 lived with grandparents
12	The Overlooked Side of the Experience: personal Growth and Quality of Life Among Grandparents of Children Who Survived Cancer ¹⁸	Journal of Family Social Work	Israel	2014	56 grandparents of children who survived cancer and 60 grandparents of healthy children
13	Significados dos bisavós para crianças baianas ¹⁹	Revista Kairós Gerontologia	Brazil	2014	50 children
14	Thinking about my grandparent: How dementia influences adolescent grandchildren's perceptions of their grandparents ²⁰	Journal of Aging Studies	Spain	2014	145 grandchildren
15	Grandparents Raising Their Grandchildren: Acknowledging the Experience of Grief ²¹	Australian Social Work	Australia	2013	34 elderly people
16	O imaginário de um grupo de avós idosos responsáveis por seus netos adolescentes em vulnerabilidade ²²	Revista Kairós Gerontologia	Brazil	2013	6 grandparents
17	Interactive programs with preschool children bring smiles and conversation to older adults: time-sampling study ²³	BioMed Central Geriatrics	Japan	2013	25 elderly people
18	Adolescent grandchildren's perceptions of grandparents' involvement in UK: an interpretation from life course and evolutionary theory perspective ²⁴	European Journal of Ageing	Finland	2012	1,488 adolescents
19	Grandparents raising grandchildren: negotiating the complexities of role-identity conflict ²⁵	Child & Family Social Work	Australia	2012	34 elderly people
20	Grandmothers Offering Regular Auxiliary Care for Their Grandchildren: An Expression of Generativity in Later Life? ²⁶	Journal of Women & Aging	Spain	2012	24 elderly people
21	O lugar dos avós na configuração familiar com netos adolescentes ²⁷	Revista Kairós Gerontologia	Brazil	2012	31 adolescents living with their grandparents; 56 adolescents who do not reside with their grandparents
23	Support to Aging Parents and Grown Children in Black and White Families ²⁸	Journal The Gerontologist	USA	2011	613 adults
24	Offering to provide child care for preschool grandchildren: Grandparents behaving generatively ²⁹	Australian Journal on Ageing,	Australia and New Zealand	2010	85 grandparents

Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2020.

Concerning the characteristics of the articles, there is a variety of countries discussing the theme; Brazil and the countries of Europe were the ones that published the most about the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. It is possible to notice an increasing increase in interest on the part of professionals and the population, of increasingly knowing about childhood and old age. In this regard, the themes have been constantly studied by researchers from different areas and different countries, mainly health, education, social and legal sciences, among others.³⁰

Regarding the years of publication, it is concluded that the relationship between generations gained prominence in the years 2012 to 2014, which reveals the relevance of the matter under debate. The need to discuss the new family circumstances, stands out as an important factor for the growth of this theme in recent years and different countries. The transformations that have been taking place in contemporary times, such as the departure of women into the labor market, changes in gender and parental roles, have shown that the roles of mediators have been transformed, since fathers and mothers are forced to share their time between work and taking care of the home and children.³¹ Grandparents are often called upon to exercise this function, either partially or in full.³² The family environment is considered privileged for the constitution of psychic life, complete and cultural development, and intergenerational transmission, which provides support for the individual and social formation of human beings. Grandparents tend to be the main responsible for the transmission of these values in the relationship with their grandchildren, and the maternal or paternal functions previously exercised by them can influence the role of grandfather to be conflicting or satisfactory.³²

Table 2: Objectives and results obtained from the studies addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, João Pessoa city, Paraíba State, Brazil, 2010-2019. (N=23).

No.	Objectives	Results
01	To examine whether there is an association between grandparent care and loneliness, social isolation and/or the size of an individual's social milieu.	They showed reduced loneliness and scores of social isolation amongst those who care for a grandchild. Furthermore, an increasing number of important people with whom individuals maintained regular contact between those who cared for a grandchild.
02	To assess the associations between the presence of a grandfather at home, who is a three-generation household, and the mental health of children in different countries, whether this situation is frequent or not.	The presence of a grandfather is associated with an increased risk of child mental health issues. In homes with two parents, the effect of having a grandparent is significant, while it does not occur in homes with a single parent. In each country, the presence of a grandfather is a risk for problems of externalization or internalization.
03	To examine the health consequences when Chinese grandparents look after not only their grandchildren, but also their own elderly parents or in-laws.	Grandparents who cared for grandchildren had only better mental and physical health compared to non-caregivers. There was some evidence that grandparents who cared for grandchildren and great-grandparents reported greater satisfaction with life. The advantage of health care was more pronounced in urban grandparents. Rural grandparents were the most vulnerable group and their health disadvantage seemed to arise from caring for great-grandparents.
04	To explore these changes, as well as the satisfaction of grandparents' roles after relocation.	They provided an enhanced understanding of factors related to long-distance relationships between grandparents and grandchildren residing in residential care units, such as the evolution of relationships, the level of satisfaction of grandparent roles and coping mechanisms related to the challenges of maintaining these long-distance relationships.

05	To both develop and validate a multidimensional quality scale for intergenerational relationships for elderly Chinese parents.	It resulted in a four-factor model of 13 items. A reliable and valid scale can allow researchers and service professionals to accurately measure the quality of the relationship between elderly people and adult sons/daughters.
06	To describe the grandchildren's view of their relationships.	They suggest that there is a difference in intergenerational relationships according to gender. The children observe that the internal domestic space is much more the grandmother's domain; however, when grandparents stay at home, the image that grandchildren have is that of a man who "sits and watches television".
07	To analyze the use of social networking sites (SNS) among elderly people.	The Internet's self-efficacy and perceived usefulness have a positive impact on the user's behavioral intent in relation to the system. They indicate that grandchildren have a significantly greater effect on the path between perceived utility and behavioral intention than grandparents.
08	To analyze the longitudinal relationship between child care and grandparents' health.	Early and later health in life and socioeconomic circumstances are associated with grandparents. Grandmothers who care for children are in better physical health. The effect of grandparents on health remains significant even in a lifelong approach.
09	To identify the experience of grandparents of children with intellectual disabilities and children with typical development about daily life and support practices in the family context and about the perception of stress.	They pointed out that grandmothers are an important source of help for families, providing different types of assistance. Additionally, according to the grandmothers' report, they are stressed regardless of their grandchild's condition, whether disabled or not.
10	To analyze the life experiences of elderly people with the young audience.	The elderly perceived intergenerational reminiscence as a highly engaging and enjoyable activity. They indicate that intergenerational reminiscence can be beneficial for the education of young students.
11	To analyze the emotional and psychological well-being of informal grandparent caretakers compared to non-relative caregivers and the children in their care.	Children in care of their grandparents exhibited better behavior and adaptive functioning than children living with foster caregivers. Elderly people were tired by the routine and complained about the time they spent with the children.
12	To identify the resources that contributed to the growth and quality of life of grandparents and children.	Grandparents of children who survived cancer report similar levels of stressful events, lower levels of social support and quality of life and higher levels of personal growth than grandparents of healthy children.
13	To identify the meaning that great-grandchildren attribute to great-grandparents.	Great-grandparents are seen, by children, from a perspective of generativity and longevity, in other words, as previous and founders of the family.
14	To examine how grandchildren perceive their dementia-bearing grandparents.	Dementia had a strong influence on responses to the worst qualities of grandparents, which reflected characteristics of the disease and not personal characteristics.
15	To explore the grief experience reported by grandparents who are responsible for raising their grandchildren.	While all grandparents referred to the benefits, satisfaction and joy of taking on the grandchildren's paternity, their narratives were deeply imbued with experiences of loss and sadness and difficult moments to give them with this new reality.
16	To understand the imaginary of a group of grandparents.	These grandparents, who have a dual role as grandparents/parents, have love and, due to the circumstances of life, have to assume this responsibility, but if they did not have it, it would be different. The grandchildren assume out of necessity, due to the contingencies of family life, but they would like to be like the grandparents described in the literature: to live a peaceful and sweet avidity.
17	To analyze changes in visual attention, facial expression, engagement/behavior and intergenerational conversation in elderly adults brought about by a performance-based and socially oriented intergenerational program to determine a desirable style of interaction.	Visual attention across generations was significantly higher in the intergenerational performance-based programming group than the social-oriented intergenerational programming group.
18	To analyze the perception of grandchildren in the involvement of grandparents.	Those children who live only with the mother report statistically significant less involvement of his paternal grandmother than those children living with both parents.
19	To better understand the grandparents who are responsible for raising their grandchildren.	Financial problems have been widely documented as a negative stimulus in the life of the elderly, emotional problems of grandparents, health issues, exhaustion, high levels of stress, anxiety and depression are frequent.
20	To explore the meaning that grandmothers offering regular child care attribute to this experience and the extent to which the notion of generativity can explain the meaning of the experience of caring for a grandchild.	They suggest that grandmothers consider their children's contribution as part of their parental duty to help in times of need. A number of consequences of care were mentioned, generally both positive and satisfactory.
21	To identify and understand the place of grandparents in the family setting.	The adolescents who reside with their grandparents perceive them as nervous, because they are on a daily basis facing the generation conflicts.
22	To know whether different factors can explain the racial differences in supporting older children versus elderly parents.	They revealed that white middle-aged adults provided more support to children than middle-aged black adults. Demands from children, beliefs about support and rewards for helping explained these racial differences. Middle-aged black adults gave more support to parents than middle-aged white adults. Beliefs about support and feelings of personal reward for providing support explained such difference, but resources and demands do not.
23	To analyze grandparents' generativity in the training of their preschool grandchildren.	They reported having offered to take care of children, even before or when a need arose, and were happy to help and collaborate in the care process of their grandchildren, their social formation and sharing knowledge as well.

Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2020.

With regard to the objectives, it was possible to show that they go beyond the analysis or identification of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, the studies investigated the influence of grandparents on the life and training of grandchildren, their contribution to school activities, as well as the correlation of children's interaction with elderly people, how much this relationship can be determinant for the quality of life of the elderly person, for their physical and mental health. In this respect, the relationship between elderly people and children was found to have a positive impact on both maintaining autonomy and independence in some activities, keeping up the cognitive and motor level, and influencing socialization as well.¹⁰

The relationship of elderly people with their children and grandchildren involves great emotional complexity and the quality of these relationships is associated with their physical and mental health conditions. These characteristics are reflected both in the home structure and in the perception of family functioning. How the family manages to optimize its resources to provide care to the elderly involves the choices that family members make according to their structure, their cultural, political and economic milieu, and the norms of filial piety.¹²

Concerning the results of the articles, it is clear that grandparents becoming active and present figures. From this point of view, grandparents emerge on the contemporary scene as a form of social support that parents routinely rely on for the task of caring for and educating their children. In everyday family life, grandparents are concerned with passing on to their descendants, especially their grandchildren, the lessons they have extracted from the events of their own life stories.⁹

Research shows that, in the intergenerational relationships between grandparents and grandchildren, more significant than the frequency and amount of contact between children and grandparents, it is the quality of the intergenerational relationships that are being established and in what context they occur, since they can cooperate positive or negative way for the development of attitudes towards old age that children are developing, and to strengthen intergenerational ties and solidarity.¹²

Given this framework, studies have shown that children need, in addition to getting to know those elderly persons better and having positive attitudes towards them, to learn how to deal with the aging process, then realizing that the actions they take during their lives can influence how they will eventually age.²⁶

Thus, for more positive responses amongst children, when compared to the numbers of other studies carried out with adults, there is an indication that children's positive attitudes towards old age become negative throughout adolescence and adulthood. Therefore, one must invest in educating children about the aging process, so that they keep developing positive attitudes.¹²

Another important factor to be considered, when grandparents assume daily care, together with the support of grandchildren, is the significant risk of illness by elderly people, which might lead to emotional stress and, in more severe cases, depressive and social isolation, warning of the risk of this type of relationship. Furthermore, behavioral and emotional problems are at increased risk of appearing in children raised by grandparents, with the absence of parental participation.³³

Nonetheless, there are more positive aspects related to the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, an important factor was the emotional support which can be understood as the expression of affection, trust and affection through physical or gestural exchange, while the cognitive refers to the exchange of experiences and information about the family, permitting to understand situations.⁷

Concerning the limitations of this review, the authors defined both inclusion and exclusion criteria, in which the gray literature was not included. Moreover, there was defined a 10-year period for sample selection and language restriction.

CONCLUSIONS

By using the integrative literature review method, it possible to underline scientific publications addressing the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The relationship between elderly people and children was found to have a positive impact on both maintaining autonomy and independence in some activities, keeping up the cognitive and motor level, and influencing socialization as well. The relationship of elderly people with their children and grandchildren involves great emotional complexity and the quality of these relationships is associated with their physical and mental health conditions. Such characteristics impact both on the home structure and the perception of family functioning.

Bearing the aforementioned in mind, it was possible to perceive the relevance of knowing about aging and the cultural repercussions that this causes in society. Preparing individuals who understand the aging process. Hence, looking for the transformations of generations in grandchildren who welcome and do not bring stigmas, which rather provide moments of social interaction and closer cohesive relationships between grandparents and grandchildren.

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