

The impact of intergenerational parenting styles on adolescents' psychological resilience: The mediating role of family support

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ABSTRACT

As China gradually transitions to an aging society, intergenerational parenting styles have undergone significant changes. Intergenerational parenting has a multifaceted impact on individual development. This study will explore whether different types of intergenerational parenting have an impact on adolescents' psychological resilience and whether family support can play a mediating role. The study collected 402 questionnaires from adolescents aged 12–18. The results showed that different types of intergenerational parenting did not have a significant impact on adolescents' psychological resilience, and family support did not play a mediating role. However, there were significant differences in the family support perceived by adolescents under different types of intergenerational parenting.

KEYWORDS

Intergenerational parenting; psychological resilience; family support

1 Introduction

As the world's most populous country, China has entered an aging society and is expected to enter a super-aged society by 2030. The direct result of an aging population is a shortage of available labour. In order to address the problem of an insufficient supply of effective labour in China, the State Council announced the '14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Ageing Undertakings and the Elderly Care Service System' on 21 February 2022, which clearly states that the statutory retirement age will be gradually delayed, i.e. China will gradually delay the retirement age from 60 for men and 55 for women to 65 for men and 60 for women. This indicates that China will gradually expand the working-age population to supplement the gradually declining labour supply. Delayed retirement will have a certain impact on intergenerational parenting (Lu Dong, 2023). Delayed retirement means that older people will continue to remain in the workforce, which may reduce the time and energy they have to participate in intergenerational parenting. For families that rely on grandparents to care for their grandchildren, they may need to find other ways of care. The changing pattern of intergenerational parenting may have an impact on the socio-emotional abilities of young people. Social and emotional competence is the ability of an individual to face complex situations of growth and development, and to master and apply a series of core abilities related to individual adaptation and social development based on personal feelings and interactive experiences of social relationships in the process of socialization (Du Yuan & Mao Yaqing, 2018). It has a significant impact on the comprehensive development of individuals. Psychological resilience, as an important component of social and emotional competence, plays an important role in adolescents' ability to cope with stress and their overall development. This study aims to explore the impact of intergenerational education on adolescents' psychological resilience and the mediating role of family support in this process.

2 Literature review

2.1 Studies on intergenerational parenting

Intergenerational parenting, also known as intergenerational education, refers to the care and education of grandchildren by their grandparents, that is, grandparents taking on some or all of the responsibility for the upbringing and care of their grandchildren. Que Pan (2011) proposed that intergenerational parenting in the broad sense refers to grandparents taking on all or part of the responsibility for raising their grandchildren, which is divided into two types: complete intergenerational parenting and incomplete intergenerational parenting. Complete intergenerational parenting refers to the complete responsibility of grandparents for the child's life and education. Incomplete intergenerational parenting refers to grandparents temporarily taking on the responsibility of parenting or grandparents and parents jointly raising the grandchildren. Gu Fenfen (2005) divides intergenerational education into four types based on the educational approach, namely over-concerned, over-supervised, harshly punished, and democratically understood. Other studies have classified grandparenting according to the reasons for grandparents' involvement in intergenerational parenting as "forced intergenerational parenting families" and "non-forced intergenerational parenting families" (Chen Chuanfeng & Sun Yafei, 2020). The complexity of care itself has also led to the blurring of boundaries between different types, resulting

in significant differences in researchers' measurements of intergenerational parenting itself (Lu Dong, 2023). In order to more clearly and precisely define the type of intergenerational parenting and focus on the main body of care, this study intends to adopt the classification criteria proposed by Que Pan (2001). Existing studies have not reached a consensus on the impact of intergenerational parenting on child development. One group of studies believes that intergenerational parenting has a more negative impact on children, while another group of studies believes that intergenerational parenting has no negative impact on child development and may even have positive effects.

A series of studies have found that grandparenting has a negative impact on social development, including mental health, personality, interpersonal relationships and social adaptation. Ju Xiaoyan and Zhang Chenxuan (2022) found in their study of left-behind children that the level of social development of children in families with complete grandparenting was significantly lower than that of children in families with incomplete grandparenting, and also significantly lower than that of children in families with complete parenting. At the same time, children in grandparenting families showed more tendencies towards character defects such as hysteria, hypochondriasis, paranoia and schizophrenia. He Yimin (2004) found in a family sample survey that nearly 60% of children who received intergenerational parenting had problems such as willfulness, selfishness, apathy, isolation, and self-centredness to varying degrees. And some studies have found that intergenerational parenting has a significant negative predictive effect on the overall self-reliance and academic self-reliance of children aged 6-12 (Ling Hui et al., 2021).

However, studies in India and South Africa (Profe W et al., 2017; Attar-Schwartz S et al., 2009) found that children raised by grandparents had lower depression detection rates, higher emotional intelligence and prosocial behaviour. Shen Weihua (2001) believes that the rich social experience and life insights accumulated by grandparents in social practice can promote children's social development and effectively deal with children's education problems. Other studies have found that there is no significant difference in the overall mental health of adolescents raised by parents and those raised by grandparents, indicating that different parenting styles have a limited impact on children's long-term mental health (Shi Zhidao & Cao Rifang, 2010).

2.2 Psychological resilience

Psychological resilience is the ability of an individual to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or other significant life stresses. It means the ability to bounce back in the face of life's pressures and setbacks (APA, 2004). At present, the concept of psychological resilience is mainly understood from three aspects: outcome, trait, and process. The outcome definition defines psychological resilience in terms of developmental outcomes, and believes that for a person to be resilient, they must have experienced a serious blow and still develop well after the blow (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The quality definition sees psychological resilience as an ability or quality of the individual, a characteristic possessed by the individual. The process definition sees psychological resilience as a dynamic process of development and change. For example, psychological resilience is a dynamic process in which individuals adapt well to dangerous environments. Compared to the other two definitions, the process definition is more relevant to intervention. While it is important to understand what psychological resilience is, it is also of practical value to know how to promote psychological resilience to bring about positive effects (Hu Yueqin & Gan Yiqun, 2008).

The CD-Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) developed by Connor and Davidson and the Resilience Scale for adults (RSA) developed by Friborg are widely used. However, Chinese people are influenced by the traditional cultural concept of adversity, and their psychological resilience may be expressed differently from that of foreigners. Under the influence of dialectical thinking, Chinese people have an optimistic and dialectical attitude towards adversity and misfortune, believing that adversity is a test of 'great responsibilities to be assigned by heaven', and that misfortune 'may be a blessing in disguise' (Hu Yueqin & Gan Yiqun, 2008). Cross-cultural studies have also demonstrated that Chinese people tend to perceive events in an optimistic way cognitively (Wang D, 2002). Therefore, the Chinese version of CD-RISC translated by Yu and Zhang (2007) has some inapplicable aspects in the Chinese social context. Chen Jianwen and Huang Xiting (2004) developed a sub-dimension of psychological resilience in a social adaptability scale for middle school students based on lexical assumptions. However, they regarded resilience as a personality trait and did not focus on the process. The scale developed by Hu Yueqin et al. (2008) for adolescents can be used in studies on adolescent mental health and stress coping in Eastern cultures.

2.3 Family support

Family support refers to the material, emotional and informational help provided by parents (or caregivers) to their children (or wards) during their growth process for certain parenting purposes in a certain family atmosphere (Zhu Lingyun, 2024). Research shows that the more support behaviours adolescents perceive from their parents, the higher their expectations for the future and the more plans they have to pursue higher education (McWhirter et al., 1998), as well as clearer career direction (Constantine et al., 2005), and higher self-efficacy (Gushue et al., 2006; Raymund et al., 2012;

Turner et al., 2011).

According to the above research, previous studies have found that there is still controversy about the impact of intergenerational parenting on adolescents' psychological resilience, and they have not explored the impact of intergenerational parenting categories that focus on emphasizing the care subject on psychological resilience. This study will directly examine the relationship between types of intergenerational parenting and psychological resilience in adolescents. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that there is a correlation between types of intergenerational parenting and psychological resilience in adolescents, that the impact of different types of intergenerational parenting on the level of psychological resilience in adolescents differs significantly.

3 Methods

3.1 Research subjects

A random sample was taken, and adolescents aged 12-18 in Sichuan Province were selected as the research subjects for this study. It was estimated that 400 questionnaires would be distributed.

3.2 Research tools

3.2.1 Questionnaire on the intergenerational education model

The questionnaire uses the intergenerational education model questionnaire (2022) by Ju Xiaoyan and Zhang Chenxuan, with the question 'Which type of parenting do you fall into?': complete intergenerational parenting (i.e., completely raised by grandparents), incomplete intergenerational parenting (grandparents and parents co-parenting), and complete parental parenting.

3.2.2 Chinese adaptation of the Psychological Resilience Scale (Hu Yueqin & Gan Yiqun, 2008)

The scale consists of 27 items and includes 5 dimensions. The alpha of each dimension is >0.7 . The external validity of the scale is supported by the correlation coefficients with other resilience scales (RS) and the quality of life of middle school students, which are 0.53 and 0.49 respectively.

3.2.3 Family Support Scale (PSS-Fa)

The PSS-FA (Procidano & Heller, 1983) was used to measure the overall family support of the subjects. There are 15 items in total, with a 2-level scoring method (1 point for 'yes' and 0 point for 'no'), and the total score is 15 points. The higher the score, the higher the family support. 0–5 points indicate a low family support level, 6–10 points indicate a medium family support level, and 11–15 points indicate a high family support level. The reliability of this scale is 0.827, and the validity is 0.814.

3.3 Research procedure

This study was conducted by a professionally trained undergraduate psychology major who served as the main tester. 400 questionnaires were distributed and collected online through the Questionnaire Star platform.

3.4 Data processing methods

This study used SPSS 20.0 to organize and analyze the data. After repeated checks to ensure that the data had been entered correctly, descriptive statistics were used to show the situation of intergenerational parenting and the psychological resilience of adolescents, the F test was used to verify whether there were significant differences in psychological resilience between adolescents of different types of intergenerational parenting, and the PROCESS plug-in was used to analyze the mediating role of family support.

4 Data

After removing invalid responses that did not meet the requirements, a total of 402 valid questionnaires were collected. After organizing the questionnaire data, it was analyzed using SPSS 24.0. The mean age of the subjects was 14.89 (SD=2.08). There were 64, 142 and 196 adolescents in the fully-separated, partially-separated and fully-parented groups, accounting for 15.92%, 35.32% and 48.76% of the total sample, respectively.

Table 1 Frequencies for Type of intergenerational parenting

Type of intergenerational parenting	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 (complete grandparenting)	64	15.920	15.920	15.920
2 (incomplete grandparenting)	142	35.323	35.323	51.244
3 (complete parenting)	196	48.756	48.756	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	402	100.000		

An analysis of variance was used to test the impact of different types of intergenerational parenting on adolescents' psychological resilience, and it was found that $p=0.749>0.05$, $F(2)=0.289$ (see Table 3). This indicates that there is no significant difference in psychological resilience between adolescents of different types of intergenerational parenting. An analysis of mediating variables (see Table 4; Table 5) found that family support did not significantly mediate the effect.

Table 2 Descriptives - Psychological Resilience Scale

Type of intergenerational parenting	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
1	64	99.953	13.487	1.686	0.135
2	142	99.683	12.611	1.058	0.127
3	196	98.745	14.457	1.033	0.146

Table 3 ANOVA - Psychological Resilience Scale

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Type of intergenerational parenting	108.141	2	54.071	0.289	0.749	0.001
Residuals	74638.844	399	187.065			

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 4 Analysis of the intermediary role (n=402)

	Psychological Resilience Scale					PSS-FA					Psychological Resilience Scale				
	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β	B	SE	t	p	β
Constant	100.843**	2.266	44.506	0.000	-	10.336*	0.301	34.370	0.000	-	106.886*	4.497	23.768	0.000	-
Type of intergenerational parenting	-0.676	0.928	-0.728	0.467	-0.036	0.967**	0.123	7.851	0.000	0.365	-0.111	0.995	-0.111	0.912	-0.006
PSS-FA											-0.585	0.376	-1.555	0.121	-0.083
R ²			0.001					0.134					0.007		
Adjusted R ²			-0.001					0.131					0.002		
F			F (1,400)=0.531,p=0.467					F (1,400)=61.632,p=0.000					F (2,399)=1.475,p=0.230		

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

An analysis of variance was used to test whether different types of intergenerational parenting had an impact on the family support perceived by adolescents. The result showed that $p<0.001$, $F(2)=33.994$, $\eta^2=0.146$ (see Table 3). Different types of intergenerational parenting have a significant effect on the family support perceived by adolescents. Post-hoc tests found that there was a significant difference between complete grandparenting and incomplete grandparenting and complete grandparenting and complete parenting, $p<0.001$; there was a significant difference between incomplete grandparenting and complete parenting, $p<0.001$ (see Table 6). Adolescents in partially intergenerationally raised families perceived significantly less family support than adolescents in fully parent-raised families.

Table 5 Summary of the results of the intermediary effect test

Item	c	a	b	a*b	a*b(Boot SE)	a*b(z)	a*b (p)	a*b(95% BootCI)	c'	conclusion
Type of intergenerational parenting=> PSS-FA=>Psychological Resilience Scale	-0.676	0.967**	-0.585	-0.565	0.019	-30.046	0.000	-0.069 ~ 0.006	-0.111	The intermediary role is not significant

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$

Table 6 Descriptives - PSS-FA

Type of intergenerational parenting	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
1	64	11.000	1.643	0.205	0.149
2	142	12.542	1.712	0.144	0.136
3	196	13.138	1.913	0.137	0.146

Table 7 ANOVA - PSS-FA

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Type of intergenerational parenting	220.926	2	110.463	33.994	< .001	0.146
Residuals	1296.527	399	3.249			

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 8 Post Hoc Comparisons - Type of intergenerational parenting

		Mean Difference	SE	t	P_{tukey}
1	2	-1.542	0.271	-5.683	< .001
	3	-2.138	0.260	-8.237	< .001
2	3	-0.596	0.199	-2.998	0.008

Note. P-value adjusted for comparing a family of 3

5 Discussion

The data analysis shows that different types of intergenerational parenting have no significant effect on adolescents' psychological resilience, and family support does not play a mediating role. However, there are significant differences in the family support perceived by adolescents under different types of intergenerational parenting. The family support perceived by adolescents in complete grandparenting is significantly lower than that of adolescents in incomplete grandparenting and complete parenting. The family support perceived by adolescents in complete grandparenting mainly comes from grandparents, but grandparents find it difficult to provide adequate material and emotional support due to limited resources and limited perceptions. The family support perceived by adolescents in incomplete intergenerational parenting is significantly lower than that of adolescents in complete parental parenting, which may be because parents can provide more appropriate support for their children, while the co-parenting of parents and grandparents may involve differences between generations and differences in parenting styles, which in turn weaken the role of family support. Although different types of intergenerational parenting have a significant impact on adolescents' perceived family support, family support does not mediate the relationship between types of intergenerational parenting and psychological resilience, and different types of intergenerational parenting do not significantly affect psychological resilience. This is similar to the conclusion of Shi Zhidao and Cao Rifang (2010), who found that there was no significant difference in the overall mental health of adolescents raised by parents and those raised by grandparents. It can be inferred from this that the impact of the type of grandparenting on adolescents' psychological resilience is weak. In particular, as time goes by, adolescents enter deeper social relationships and gain more experience, such as teacher-student and peer relationships, and personal experiences, which will all have an impact on their psychological resilience. It can be seen that the impact of the type of grandparenting on individual development is more concentrated in childhood, a stage when adolescents are more likely to enter deeper social relationships and gain more experience.

Given the weak influence of the type of grandparenting on adolescents' psychological resilience, more research should be conducted in the future to explore the factors that can affect adolescents' psychological resilience. However, the importance of the type of grandparenting should not be overlooked, as it can affect adolescents' perceived family support, which may in turn affect their mental health and development. Subsequent research can continue to explore which specific aspects of adolescents' mental health are affected by intergenerational parenting, so that timely and appropriate interventions can be made.

6 Conclusion

Different types of intergenerational parenting have no significant effect on adolescents' psychological resilience, and family support does not play a mediating role in this. However, there are significant differences in the family support perceived by adolescents under different types of intergenerational parenting. Adolescents who are completely raised by grandparents perceive significantly less family support than adolescents who are partially raised by grandparents and fully raised by their parents; and adolescents who are partially raised by grandparents perceive significantly less family support than adolescents who are fully raised by their parents.

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