

Grandparents and Parents. Their Educational Roles and the Future Time Perspective

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Abstract: When it comes to social perception, older adults are usually associated with decline in many areas. However, there are numerous studies that have emphasized the fact that older adults are more likely to facilitate positive interactions and avoid negative ones, in interpersonal relationships. In this context, we verified the extent to which the elders' relationships with their grandchildren are perceived differently in comparison with the parents' relationships with their children, aged 7-11 years. We analysed the perceived differences between the positive and negative elements of the educational role exercised by grandparents ($M = 68.6$ age) and parents ($M = 38.9$ age) in their relationships with grandchildren/children. For this purpose, 878 participants from 439 adult-child dyads participated in this study. The findings indicate that the grandparents' educational role is evaluated with more positive and fewer negative elements than the parents' educational role. In this study, we will also test the association between the future time perspective of the relationship and educational role of grandparents/parents.

Keywords: grandparents' educational role; parents' educational role; future time perspective of the relationship.

1. Introduction

As a result of increasing life expectancy (Administration on Aging, 2012; Crampton, 2009), a person has the opportunity, more than ever before, to make the acquaintance of several generations of the same family and also to spend several decades as a grandparent (Glaser et al., 2010; Mann, Khan and Leeson, 2009; Stelle, Fruhauf, Orel and Landry-Meyer, 2010). Researchers have examined different aspects associated with the role of the grandparent, and the most prominent is the caregiver's role for grandchildren (Buchanan, Attar-Schwartz, Tan, Flouri and Griggs, 2008; Chanfreau et al., 2011; Doley, Bell, Watt and Simson, 2015; Ellis and Simmons, 2014; Glaser, Price, Montserrat, Di Gessa and Tinker, 2013; Glaser et al., 2010; Guzman, 2004; Viguer, Meléndez, Valencia, Cantero and Navarro, 2010). In addition to caring for grandchildren, grandparents often perform additional tasks, such as maintaining the family and cultural identity (Buchanan et al., 2008; Sigad and Eisikovits, 2013; Taylor, Robila and Lee, 2005; Viguer et al., 2010) and mediation and support for the

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grandchildren's well-being (Tanskanen and Danielsbacka, 2012; Sheridan, Haight and Cleeland, 2011; Taylor et al., 2005; Wenera, Buchbinderb, Lowensteina and Livnib, 2005). The grandparents, regardless of the type of care and of the amount of time spent with the grandchildren, perform an educational role for their grandchildren. This is because they present, explain, encourage and reward certain behaviours, rituals, practices, values and attitudes of their grandchildren, whilst they also restrict, punish or forbid other behaviours exhibited by their grandchildren. Although this role is common in the lives of grandparents, the same cannot be said about the frequency of the studies made on how grandparents perform it and the differences between them and the parents.

Grandparents' and Parents' Differences in their Educational Role. Grandchildren perceive the educational role of grandparents as auxiliary to their parents' role, but with significant responsibilities for providing homework help, knowledge and acquisition skills, career guidance, provision of additional support in times of crisis and also the provision of relaxation and enjoyable activities (Griggs, Tan, Buchanan, Attar-Schwartz and Flouri, 2010). On the other hand, there are certain activities that most grandchildren do not perform with their grandparents but only with their parents (Viguer et al., 2010). However, the children's perception is different, depending on the status of the adult (parent/grandparent); for instance, they usually get their grandparents' full attention when they are together, but do not receive the same amount of attention from their parents (Griggs et al., 2010). Generally, the educational role of the grandparents is positive with implications for their grandchildren's social and emotional development, especially in times of family reorganization (Buchanan et al., 2008). A possible difference between grandparents and parents is the fact that the grandparents, once they advance in age and become old, tend to experience less conflict and usually react to interpersonal tensions with more positivity and fewer negative elements than young adults who have a high probability of being parents (Birditt and Fingerman, 2005; Birditt, Fingerman and Almeida, 2005; Blanchard-Fields, Mienaltowski and Seay, 2007).

Future Time Perspective (FTP) and Educational Role.

According to the socio-emotional selectivity theory (SST), the future time perspective is a variable associated with many relational, motivational and emotional aspects (Carstensen, 1993; Carstensen and Charles, 1998; Carstensen, Isaacowitz and Charles, 1999; Lang, 2001). For instance, time limitation is associated with a greater focus on facilitating emotional and generative interpersonal reactions (Carstensen, Fung and Charles, 2003; Fredrickson and Carstensen, 1990; Fung and Carstensen, 2006; Lang and Carstensen, 2002). These aspects are supported by studies on grandparents which revealed that grandparents who perceive time as limited attached higher

levels of meaning from grandparenthood than grandparents who perceive time as open (Fung, Siu, Choy and McBride-Chang, 2005). At the same time, advancement through age is associated with time perception as limited (Lang and Carstensen, 2002; Man and Turliuc, 2014) which involves parents who are young adults (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Curtin and Mathews, 2013) and grandparents, of whom the majority are at an older age (Glaser et al., 2013), as perceiving time differently and have different attitudes and expectations in their interactions with children (Carstensen et al., 2003).

There are no studies that make a direct reference to the relations between the perspective of time and the educational role (with positive and negative behaviours) of grandparents and parents. The aim of this research is to fill this gap and emphasize whether the time limitation is related to more positive and fewer negative elements which, according to the SST theory, serve as emotional and generative goals (Carstensen et al., 2003).

Gender Differences in Terms of the Educational Role.

There are numerous studies that have suggested the existence of gender differences in how parents and grandparents exercise their educational role. Mothers use the following negative methods more often: slapping, shaking, hitting (Gámez-Guadix, Straus, Carrobles, Muñoz-Rivas and Almendros, 2010; Lansford et al., 2010; Straus and Stewart, 1999); yelling, shaming, blaming or name calling (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2010); fathers apply more severe corporal punishment (McKee et al., 2007). However, mothers also display more positive behaviours: expressing love and support, non-verbal affection and so on (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2010). At the same time, females spend more time in activities related to childcare, both as mothers (Papalia, Olds and Feldman, 2010) and grandmothers (Buchanan et al., 2008; Glaser et al., 2013; Mann et al., 2009; Suito and Pillemer, 2006; Viguer et al., 2010). Consequently, many gender differences identified in parents also apply to grandparents; for instance, female grandparents are perceived to be closer and warmer than male grandparents (Buchanan et al., 2008; Suito and Pillemer, 2006; Taylor et al., 2005; Viguer et al., 2010).

Objectives and hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively document the differences between the perception of the educational role of grandparents and parents in relationships with their grandchildren/children, also taking into account the association with the future time perspective of the relationship. In our study, we hypothesized and tested the following assertions:

1. Grandparents' educational roles are evaluated by children with more positive and fewer negative elements when compared to those of their parents.
2. Females (both mothers and grandmothers) are evaluated by children with more positive and also more negative elements in their educational role, as

compared to men. 3. There is a significant association between the future time perspective of relationships (FTPR) and the adults' educational roles.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 878 participants from 439 adult-child dyads (212 grandparent-grandchild dyads and 227 parent-child dyads). Thus, 211 (48.1%) of the adults are males, while 228 (51.9%) are female; 227 (51.7%) are parents, aged 30-57 years ($M = 38.9$, $SD = 4.27$), and 212 (48.3%) are grandparents, aged 65-90 years ($M = 68.6$, $SD = 3.7$). Also, the 439 children are aged from 7-11 years. The participants were from both the rural and the urban areas of Mureş County. At the same time, only the grandparents who declared that they spent at least eight hours weekly with their grandchildren were included in the study sample.

2.2 Procedure

The adult participants completed a set of questionnaires sent in envelopes to their homes. The children/grandchildren were individually interviewed by the researcher for 20-30 minutes at home as well as in school libraries. The children were only interviewed after the adults from their families had already returned the completed questionnaires and had given their informed consent.

2.3 Measures

Future time perspective of relationship (FTPR).

The future time perspective of the relationship (FTPR) was assessed using *Future Time Perspective of Relationship Scale*, adapted by Fingerman, Miller and Charles (2008). The adults were rated on a 7-point scale of the future time perspective when it came to the relationship with the child, which ranged from 1 (very untrue) to 7 (very true) (e.g. "Many opportunities to spend time with this person await me in the future"; "I've begun to realize that time left to spend with this person is becoming limited"). The final score was the sum of the 7 item scores. Therefore, $\alpha = .86$ for parents and $\alpha = .93$ for grandparents.

Educational Role of Parents/Grandparents.

The educational roles (positive educational role - PER and negative educational role - NER) of the adults was assessed using the *Parent Perception Inventory* (PPI), developed by Hazzard, Christensen and Margolin (1983). The inventory included two subscales for the negative and positive behaviours for each parent separately. The participants had to indicate how often the adults showed certain negative behaviours and certain positive behaviours, (9 types of behaviours for each), using a five-point scale ranging from 0, "never" to 4, "often". Thus, the negative behaviours were related to privilege removal, criticism, command, physical punishment, yelling, threatening, time-out, nagging and ignoring. The positive behaviours were related to positive

reinforcement; comfort, talk-time, involvement in decision-making, time together, positive evaluation, offering independence, assistance and non-verbal affection. The final score for each subscale was the sum of the responses to the 9 items. For the adults' self-evaluation, (parents and grandparents), and for adults' evaluation by children/grandchildren, adapted forms were applied.

The internal consistency for the self-evaluated positive behaviours, (PER), of the adults reached an $\alpha = .94$ for the parents and an $\alpha = .90$ for the grandparents. Self-evaluated negative behaviours, (NER), reached an $\alpha = .86$ for the parents and $\alpha = .83$ for the grandparents. The internal consistency for the adults' positive behaviours as assessed by their children was $\alpha = .92$ for the parents and $\alpha = .83$ for the grandparents and, for the adults' negative behaviours as assessed by their children, $\alpha = .85$ for the parents and $\alpha = .88$ for the grandparents.

3. Results

All scores related to the scales for both positive and negative educational roles were normalized, taking into account the results from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality which revealed $p < .05$ for all variables.

Adults' educational roles

The ANOVA analysis of variance (2×2) was conducted to examine the effect of status and gender on the positive educational role of adults. Mean and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations of the positive educational role evaluated by children taking into account gender and status

	Male		Female	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parent	-.32	.92	-.27	1.02
Grandparent	.14	.88	.43	.82

The results revealed the existence of a significant main effect of *status*, $F(1, 437) = 47.25$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 p = .09$, a non-significant main effect of *gender*, $F(1, 437) = 3.56$; $p > .05$; $\eta^2 p = .008$, and a non-significant *status* \times *gender* interaction when it comes to the parents' positive educational role evaluated by their children $F(1, 437) = 1.83$; $p > .05$; $\eta^2 p = .004$. The grandparents (both male and female) were evaluated as exercising their educational role as using more positive elements ($M = .30$; $SD = .86$) when compared to the parents, both mothers and fathers ($M = -.30$; $SD = .97$).

The ANOVA analysis of variance (2×2) was conducted to examine the effect of status and gender on the negative educational role of adults. Mean and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviations of the negative educational role evaluated by children taking into account gender and status

	Male		Female	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parent	.26	.92	.34	.88
Grandparent	-.34	.95	-.28	.94

The results revealed the existence of a significant main effect of *status* on the adults' NER, as evaluated by the children, $F(1, 437) = 48.94$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2p = .10$; a non-significant main effect of *gender*, $F(1, 437) = .63$; $p > .05$; $\eta^2p = .001$; and a non-significant *status* × *gender* interaction, $F(1, 437) = .01$; $p > .05$; $\eta^2p = .00002$. The grandparents (both male and female) were evaluated as exercising their educational role with fewer negative elements ($M = -.31$; $SD = .94$) when compared to the parents, both mothers and fathers ($M = .30$; $SD = .90$).

The associations between grandparents' educational roles and their future time perspective

For assessing the association between self-evaluated positive/negative educational roles of the grandparents in relation with their grandchildren and grandparents' future time perspective, we used Pearson correlations. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients for educational roles of grandparents and their future time perspective

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. NER_B	-				
2. PER_B	.25**	1			
3. NER_N	.64**	.33**	1		
4. PER_N	.24**	.44**	.16*	1	
5. FTPR_B	-.55**	-.31**	-.57**	-.26**	-

Notes: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. NER_B – the grandparents' self-evaluated negative educational role; PER_B – the grandparents' self-evaluated positive educational role; NER_N – negative educational role of the grandparents evaluated by their grandchildren; PER_N – positive educational role of the

grandparents evaluated by their grandchildren; FTPR_B – the grandparents’ future time perspective of relationship.

For the grandparents, the results indicate that a future time perspective is negatively and significantly associated with the self-evaluated negative educational role ($r = -.55; p < 0.01$) and self-evaluated positive educational role ($r = -.31; p < 0.01$), with their negative educational role ($r = -.57; p < 0.01$) and positive educational role ($r = -.26; p < 0.01$) evaluated by their grandchildren. There are positive correlations between the grandparents’ self-evaluated negative and positive educational roles ($r = .25; p < 0.01$) and between the grandparents’ negative and positive educational roles evaluated by their grandchildren ($r = .16; p < 0.05$). Also, there are positive associations between the self-evaluated and evaluated negative educational role of the grandparents ($r = .64; p < 0.01$), and between their self-evaluated and evaluated positive educational role ($r = .44; p < 0.01$). In other words, a more limited time left to spend with their grandchildren is associated with a higher level of self-evaluation of positive and negative educational roles of the grandparents, with a higher level of evaluation of positive and negative educational roles of grandparents reported by their grandchildren. There are positive associations between self-evaluated/evaluated positive and negative educational roles of the grandparents, and between self-evaluated and evaluated negative/positive educational role of the grandparents.

The associations between the parents’ educational roles and their future time perspective

In a similar way, when it comes to assessing the association between self-evaluated positive/negative educational roles of the parents, evaluated positive/negative educational roles of the parents by their children, and the parents’ future time perspective we used Pearson correlations. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Pearson correlation coefficients for the educational roles of the parents and their future time perspective*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. NER_P	1				
2. PER_P	-.59**	1			
3. NER_C	.55**	-.56**	1		
4. PER_C	-.57**	.79**	-.65**	1	
5. FTPR_P	.06	-.05	.15*	-.13*	.09

Notes: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. NER_P – the parents’ self-evaluated negative educational role; PER_P – the parents’ self-evaluated positive educational role;

NER_C – negative educational role of the parents evaluated by their children;
PER_C – positive educational role of the parents evaluated by children;
FTPR_P – the parents' future time perspective of the relationship.

The results indicate that for the parents, there were no significant correlations between the future time perspective and the parents' self-evaluated positive and negative educational roles. The time left to spend with their children is positively associated with the parents' negative educational role evaluated by their children ($r = .15$; $p < 0.05$) and negatively associated with the parents' positive educational role ($r = -.13$; $p < 0.05$). There are negative correlations between the parents' self-evaluated negative and positive educational roles ($r = -.59$; $p < 0.01$), and between the parents' negative and positive educational roles evaluated by their children ($r = -.65$; $p < 0.01$). Also, there are positive associations between the self-evaluated and evaluated negative educational role of the grandparents ($r = .55$; $p < 0.01$), and between their self-evaluated and evaluated positive educational role ($r = .79$; $p < 0.01$). In the parents' case, there were no significant correlations between the future time perspective of relationship with their children and self-evaluation of positive and negative educational roles. Higher levels of the self-evaluated positive educational role of the parents are associated with lower levels of their self-evaluated negative educational role; a similar negative relation appeared in the case of evaluated positive and negative educational roles of the parents reported by the grandchildren. Also, there are positive associations between self-evaluated and evaluated positive/negative educational roles of the parents and between self-evaluated and evaluated positive/negative educational role of the parents.

4. Discussion

This study aims to understand the multigenerational relationship issues, taking into account the educational role of adults (parents and grandparents) when it comes to children, evaluated from different perspectives. This study revealed that children evaluate adults differently and perceive grandparents as using fewer negative educational elements than the parents. These findings are in line with the findings from adult interpersonal relations; for instance, according to Birditt and Fingerman (2005), persons from the same age groups as grandparents are more likely to remain calm when facing interpersonal problems by not engaging in disputes but rather by leaving the tense situation and engaging in enjoyable activities unrelated to the conflict, whilst adult-aged parents tended to raise their voices, argue, call them names, use physical aggression and manifest aggressive mimicry and gestures. Similar conclusions have come from other studies of adult interpersonal relations (Birditt et al., 2005; Blanchard-Fields, 2009; Grossmanna et al., 2010; Luong et al., 2011; Shallcross, Floerke, Ford and Mauss, 2012).

In our study, grandparents are perceived as using more positive elements than parents. These conclusions are supported, not only by the studies already mentioned (Birditt et al., 2005; Blanchard-Fields, 2009; Grossmanna et al., 2010; Luong, Charles and Fingerman, 2011; Shallcross et al., 2012), but also by studies which indicate that people of the same age as grandparents are more focused on the positive aspects (Isaacowitz, 2012; Isaacowitz and Blanchard-Fields, 2012; Isaacowitz, Toner, Goren and Wilson, 2008; Scheibe and Carstensen, 2010, Strom and Strom, 2015).

In this study, there were no significant differences, in terms of positive and negative educational roles, when the adult's gender was taken into consideration. This conclusion is contrary to studies that claim in educating minors, there are some gender differences (Buchanan et al., 2008; Gámez-Guadix et al., 2010; Glaser et al., 2010; Lansford et al., 2010; Straus and Stewart, 1999; Sutor and Pillemer, 2006; Taylor et al., 2005; Viguer et al., 2010) for both parents and grandparents. Except for positive educational role, the result is consistent with those of Hazzard, et al. (1983). A possible explanation is related to the fact that many studies that claim some gender differences in positive and negative educational roles, unlike this, took into account a small number of educational role behaviours. For instance, Straus and Stewart (1999) took into account only corporal punishment. Other possible explanations for our results can be made based on social and family changes. Today, educational responsibilities that were traditionally distributed by gender have changed, in the direction of equalization, due to the increase in women's employment (Kreider and Elliot, 2009), the need for women to develop their professional careers, due to family uncertainty and the reduction in the gap between women and men, in terms of work/family proportion (Bianchi, 2011; Cabrera, LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth and Lamb, 2000).

Furthermore, regarding the relationship between the educational role and future time perspective, significant negative associations were identified in the grandparents' case. A more limited time left in relationship with grandchildren is associated with more positive elements of a self-evaluated educational role, and more unlimited time is associated with fewer positive elements. In this research, the same trend was maintained when the educational role of the grandparents was evaluated by the grandchildren. These findings are consistent with the SST theory which postulates that people who have a limited perspective would be more motivated to facilitate positive interactions and emotional goals that serve "savouring the time left" with others (Carstensen et al., 2003, p. 108). However, there is a similar association between the self-evaluated negative role and FTPR, as well as between the negative role evaluated by grandchildren and FTPR. This means that grandparents who have a limited perspective evaluate their educational role with more negative

elements, and those who have an open perspective evaluate their educational role with fewer negative elements.

For parents, there was a significant positive association between negative educational, as evaluated by the children and FTPR. The results are consistent with the SST theory which postulates that the open perspective would motivate a person "to prepare for a long and unknown future", not for facilitating positive interactions and emotional goals (Carstensen et al., 2003, p. 107). The negative association between the positive role, as evaluated by the children and parents' FTPR, is also in line with the SST theory (Carstensen et al., 2003).

However, this study has some limitations. One is related to the fact that some variables were measured using self-reporting. Another limitation of the present study concerns the generalization of the findings. Because there was a small number of participants in our sample, the results are mostly applicable to just this sample, and our hypotheses need replication for greater confidence in these results. Further work is needed to replicate these findings in still larger samples. Additionally, we suggest the need for a longitudinal study to clarify the changes in the evaluation of a future time perspective and educational roles. Future research should also examine these conclusions, taking into account the intensity of these behaviours (negative and positive) and not just the frequency.

Another limitation is related to the fact that parent-child and grandparent-grandchild dyads are not from the same family, which involves other differences, such as those related to social status.

Conclusions

In conclusion, grandparents use more positive behaviours and fewer negative ones in their educational role as compared to the minors' parents. This replicates the findings related to interpersonal adult relationships. At the same time, limited future time perspective on the relationship is associated with the use of multiple positive and negative elements in a grandchild's education. The same can be said when we take into account grandchildren's evaluations: those grandparents who are evaluated by grandchildren with more positive and also with more negative elements in their educational role tend to perceive their future time in relation to the grandchildren as more limited. In the parents' case, the perception of limited time is associated with less negative behaviour in their educational role as perceived by their children and open time is associated with more negative behaviour. Meanwhile, the open time perspective is associated with less positive behaviour in the educational role and limited time with more positive behaviour, according to the children's assessment. Consequently, all these results, for grandparents and parents, partially confirm the postulates of the socio-emotional selectivity theory.

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