

SOME ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY FAMILY TRENDS IN THE CONTEXT OF WEAKENING INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

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Abstract

The article deals with the trends of the contemporary family, changes in its structure in comparison with the traditionally understood multigenerational family about the weakening of the position of grandparents and thus weakening their influence on the upbringing of grandchildren in contemporary society. The theoretical analysis is supplemented by data from A. Štátná presented in the pilot study of the Contemporary Czech Family project and from P. Vlachová's research Senior in the Czech Family focused on the position of grandparents in the family, their influence and the essential elements of the transgenerational transmission. The aim of this article is to clarify and present the essence of intergenerational learning and its importance in the family environment, and consequently to highlight the importance of developing intergenerational activities in the contemporary family between grandparents and grandchildren as an important means and tool for their social learning.

Keywords

family, contemporary changes in the traditional family, multigenerational family, interaction and intergenerational transmission, grandparent involvement in the family

INTRODUCTION

The family as a small social group forms a social system in which its members acquire the basis of their identity. It is a safe place, a space where its members present their views, attitudes, values to each other, but also receive and expect social support, help and support. The family also represents an important multi-generational micro-social environment of people interacting with each other and influencing each other's perceptions and actions, in which the youngest generation is formed. For the child, the family is the first social group in which social interaction takes place and in which he

or she acquires his or her first social experiences. He or she develops his or her own identity and a typical culture presented by family traditions, values and customs. According to K. Moore (2001), intergenerational transmission means that generations of parents transmit to their offspring, above all, material and immaterial resources, the potential for further development, expressed as follows:

- Financial/material capital: insurance, pensions, inheritance, marriage portion...
- Human capital: care; investment in education, grounding, health, nutrition; knowledge and skills useful for life; diseases, disorders or other health impairments subject to heredity.
- Environmental capital: environmental quality of the living space.
- Socio-cultural capital: traditions, value system (culture of poverty/wealth).
- Socio-political capital: influence in the community, membership of political and civic organizations, contacts with influential people, etc.

In these times when social and economic problems in society are on the rise, this complex situation is reflected in the life of every family and contributes to its instability. This is nothing new; the close connection between the family and social life has already been pointed out by A. Jurovský (1947), a pioneer of Slovak family pedagogy, pointing to the results of research confirming the obvious connection between the deteriorating social situation in society and conflict in the family. It is indisputable that the Slovak family has been changing in a fundamental way over the last decades due to changes, especially globalization and other pan-European trends (individualization, growing liberalism) has been changing fundamentally in recent decades.

Trends in the contemporary family

In the modern world, the institution of the family is changing, with several changes occurring over the past few decades. As a result of transformation processes, the contemporary family has visibly moved away from the established traditional model. During the twentieth century, women have gained considerable personal, economic and social autonomy, and as a result the economic function of the family is changing, as is the role of men and women in the family. The current economic and social development of society requires the economic activity of both partners, which displaces the mother's care of the children in the family's priorities. At the same time, the present confirms the tendencies towards independence of individual generations, starting from independent living of nuclear families, independent living of adult children to a small degree of expectation of help from offspring or parents, unless the situation necessarily requires it (Rabušicová, M. et al., 2011; Řičan, P., 2014; Matoušek, O., 2003). As the statistics of the last population census indicate, cohabitation of grandparents with their children's families in the same household is overall low in frequency, with this form being more frequent only in the case of single parents, or short-term, situationally conditioned. The current consumerist way of life has eroded traditional communities, family cohesion and extended family. The older members of the family still need the younger and the younger need the older,

even though the traditional forms in which these needs were met have been disrupted and altered. Young families seek to separate themselves from the families of orientation; they want to be autonomous and independent from them. This is also manifested in the fact that the determination of a name for a child born to young parents is no longer based on the generational transmission of the name, i.e. inheritance from ancestors, but on the fashion or latent value that the name carries (Hovanova, M., Šlosár, D., 2020). Currently, there is a tendency in society to underestimate intergenerational relationships, which ultimately promotes the distancing of generations from each other (Mészárosová, J., et al., 2018). The decline in regular contact with grandparents is also caused by the increased departure of young people from rural areas to cities for work, study and the tendency to move away from multigenerational families living in a common social space. In most cases, the departure of young family members is permanent, thus limiting contacts with the original family. Currently, the nuclear family type is quite widespread, with only two generations sharing the same household, namely parents and their children. This results in only occasional contact between children and grandparents. The participation of grandparents in the upbringing of the children is useful for all concerned. Grandparents bring calmness, wisdom, the ability to listen patiently, tolerance, insight and a sense of belonging, continuity, spontaneity, joy and memories of their own childhood to the upbringing of their children. Parents, through the participation of grandparents, gain space for themselves to take a break from the constant responsibilities and not feel the children as a burden. Multigenerational cohabitation is closely linked to the rules and norms that underpin the family keeps its system functioning. Grandparents, as part of a multigenerational family, approach participation in family life to varying degrees and in individual ways. Elderly involvement affects not only the running and management of household activities, but also family relationships. The educational process, in a multigenerational family system that includes grandparents, is a fundamental process that influences the development of the child.

A basic premise for the functionality of family education is that parents are accepted as the main educators. However, most experts on family education point out that the traditional concept of family gives parents the right and duty to transmit to the child their value system and idea of a good life this also applies to the educational influence of grandparents (Napora, E., 2013). The family environment allows the individual to expand his or her potential with most of the competencies needed in adult life.

The position of grandparents in a multigenerational family

The literature states that the multigenerational family model formed by parents, their children and grandparents shows stability in all epochs of human development as well as in contemporary societies (Možný, I., 2008; Matoušek, O., 2003; Napora, E., 2013). It is the grandparents who step in as the first social auxiliary or protective institution if something is not right in the young family. They have a particularly well-developed sense of what is or is not okay. The maturity of grandparents lies in their readiness for various

crises, which may be biological, medical or social in nature. All these moments of crisis are then a test of their emotional and social competence.

Parenthood transitions into grandparenthood seamlessly. With the arrival of grandchildren comes a change in the senior's relationships and thinking. Often it is a fundamental shift in attitudes. A newborn child suddenly makes a strict father and mother into a more benevolent grandfather and grandmother; a small child can already overcome many contradictions by its existence. (Matějček, Z., Dytrych, Z., 1997) Grandparents usually love their grandchildren in a different way than parents do; their arrival is an enrichment of the senior's life. Grandchildren represent an opportunity for the senior to connect with the future, they represent transformation, the formulation of new goals and to a large extent the fulfillment of their own strength. The emotional attachment to a new family member tends to be very deep and to a large extent fulfils the life of the ageing person, giving it a specific meaning. The role of the grandparent shifts the generational belonging and the awareness of this transformation can also influence the self-concept of aging people (Vágnerová, M., 2007; Hauser-Schöner, I., 1996,). In the quality time spent by the grandparent and his family, the set patterns of family functioning are more effective. It could be said that „grandchildren serve grandparents as an anchor in the social structure from which older adults can lose themselves” (Rabušicová, M. et al., 2011, p. 148).

Grandparents represent for the child a fulcrum in family integrity. The family is a safe place that is significant for the young child, not only in terms of physiological needs, but also in terms of social learning and the acquisition of values and forms of behaviour and action. The multigenerational family climate conditions the formation of ideas of future maturity and readiness for the roles of father and mother as well as the roles of grandfather and grandmother and contributes to the formation of relationships with grandparents in the orientation family. The child observes over a long period of time how his or her parents care for their parents, sets an example to the children of how to behave towards their parents when they get older and then in adulthood applies a similar scenario. So that they are ready to take on the role of their parents' „parents” in emotional relationship and in speech. (Říčan, P., 2014; Haškovcová, H., 2010). The importance of the need for parental nurturing influence increases in two-career marriages, when parents, due to busyness, have little time to raise children. The social pressure on the family related to the parents' desire to provide well economically secure for the family is also related to the task of socially acceptable performance of the roles of employee, citizen, and neighbor. Young parents are all too often exhausted by everyday life, they don't have enough time for their children, so they are more likely to reach for simpler solutions, they are more inclined to make decisions and take shortcuts. Just enough time and patience from grandparents is one of the important conditions for good parenting. Grandparents can play an important role in single-parent families, where the grandparent can saturate the need for a missing parental role model. Here again there appears to be room for grandparents who have enough time for their grandchildren (Napora, E., 2013; Cabanova, V., 2010).

Grandchildren treat their grandparents differently from their parents, they accept their grandparents, express clear emotional affection for them, have respect for them, feel comfortable with them and seek them out as a strong emotional support. At different developmental stages, they look up to their grandparents as their most trusted advisors, wanting their help and protection.

For building multi-generational (parents and grandparents) relationships in the family, appropriate behavioural patterns are important. Practice shows some of the pitfalls of living together in a multigenerational family:

(a) Running a joint household as a compromise between two generations can be a source of conflicts - shared space in a multigenerational family may not be a condition for a functioning multigenerational family. The needs of the two generations are different in many ways, so cohabitation can be stressful (Vágnerová, M., 2007; Matějček, Z., Dytrych, Z., 1997; Hauser-Schöner, I., 1996). Both the need for proximity of living and the optimal frequency of contacts in intergenerational perceptions can vary a lot. To unify the common ideas of both generations so that there are no disputes is very important, it requires a setup that needs to be addressed by open communication.

b) Asymmetry of power between the two generations of adults in the family. The authority acquired during the upbringing of children in the primary family, can lead grandparents to dominant behavior, authoritarian way of decision making in the family and in the life of their children, which can largely affect (disrupt) intergenerational cohabitation, it is a more complex cohabitation „the model of intergenerational exchange and tolerance is aunts to date largely idealized“ (Vágnerová, M., 2007; Haškovcová, H., 2010).

c) Individualization and the focus of parents on their own needs can lead to the isolation of the nuclear family, does not allow grandparents to be involved in the lives of grandchildren, to realize the role that is attributed to them in the spirit of tradition. It is this role of calm, wise advisors and balanced people – cannot. be fulfilled (Cabanova, V., 2006).

d) Prolonging the productive age of the elderly may lead to grandparents being productive, career-oriented and focused on fulfilling personal goals. There are cases when some grandparents are rather hindered by their grandchildren and interfere with their so far unfulfilled professional and emotional goals (Matějček, Z., Dytrych, Z., 1997).

Grandparents and their educational influence on grandchildren

Situations that happen during childhood and adolescence, especially in the way they spend their leisure time, play a big role for the formation and strengthening of relationships in the family. Based on past experiences, the child acquires and forms social bonds and multifaceted relationships in the future.

Several authors point out that a threat to the future of the family (nuclear and multigenerational) is that social ties will weaken as the number of contacts decreases, e.g. Houser-Schöner, I. (1996) argue that in the spirit of current trends, family support and leisure time spent together will decline. The loosening of traditional family

shackles will increasingly promote individual lifestyles. On the other hand, in contrast to those who question the functionality and necessity of the traditional family, several authors argue that the Slovak family continues to represent a relatively stable social form of coexistence, which influences the whole society's tradition and the education of its members to values (Cabanová, V., 2006). Intergenerational solidarity uses the potential of older people in the following areas: life experience, social and psychological potential, and the potential for family life. It is also necessary to point out the potential of intergenerational activities as an important means and tool of prevention in relation to selected socio-pathological phenomena of children and youth, which are a serious social problem and have a constantly increasing tendency. At present, children and young people are faced with a wide range of problem behaviours, a particularly serious problem being aggressive behaviour, which children exhibit towards each other, but which is also addressed to parents, teachers and other educators. Research on socio-pathological phenomena, which was carried out in primary and secondary schools throughout Slovakia, showed that: The most frequent socio-pathological phenomena that teachers encounter in their pupils include smoking, truancy, consumption of alcoholic beverages, bullying or aggressive behavior and use of illegal drugs (Pétiová, M., 2015; Böhmová, P., 2011). In primary schools, truancy is the most common disorder, followed by aggression and violence. As a result, the prevention of aggression and violence is the area of biggest attention by experts in the field of preventive measures. Aggression is a complex and multi-causal phenomenon. The causes can be both biological (innate) and social (acquired) in nature. Acquired dispositions are mainly related to the level of social learning, which takes place in the family in the first place. It is therefore very important, in matters of prevention, to focus on the social environment in which the child moves and which primarily influences his or her attitudes, views and values, which are then reflected in his or her actions and behavior towards others. In this regard, the family plays an important role, in which the child, through intergenerational learning, acquires a basic scale of values in life and lays the foundations for future behavior outside this institution (Jedličková, P., 2021).

Several authors are of the opinion that the best prevention of socially deviant behavior is a well-functioning family with clearly established norms and rules of mutual coexistence, a family in which parents have time for their children and provide them with a role model and a model of behavior. A family where love, understanding, tolerance, respect and reverence are the attributes that determine everyday family life. The employment of both parents, the economic security of the family limits, the time when parents can devote themselves fully to their children. Nowadays, children and young people in particular are subject to increasingly frequent and intense manifestations and consequences of aggression and aggressive behavior, one of the reasons for which is neglected or incorrect education, the inability of the young generation to communicate, to engage in dialogue, to listen actively, to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, to establish long-term, strong and healthy relationships and, on the basis of these, to mature as human beings in the biological, psychological, social and spiritual spheres. These

facts point to the importance of intergenerational education in the family environment between grandparents and grandchildren, which also acts as a preventive tool in relation to the occurrence of aggressive behavior in children.

It is evident from the implemented family-grandparent programs in different countries that the benefits of grandparenting include the reduction of the participation of children and young people in various socio-pathological phenomena: In moments of difficulties and problems, grandparents provide support and stability to the young generation, develop their social skills by engaging in various joint leisure activities, and at the same time are a natural prevention against drug addiction and antisocial behavior. Intergenerational activity in both generations develops the ability to learn; it promotes social integration, reduces social segregation and increases feelings of worth and self-confidence. This results in better school attendance, better school performance, and a lower likelihood of socio-pathological action by motivating factors (Jedličková, P., 2021).

The grandparents' role in the family is irreplaceable. Grandparents are important for grandchildren, they know how to talk to them, spend free time with them, seek help from them (Balogova, B., 2009). Grandparental care is becoming popular for many reasons. Parents feel that grandparents are trustworthy, and that their care has many benefits in relation to grandchildren. The care provided by grandparents is flexible and usually more economically advantageous. In the Czech Republic, the help of grandparents in caring for preschool or school-age children is used by about nine out of ten families (Št'astná, A., 2021).

However, this does not mean that grandparents' care for their grandchildren is not threatened by current social and political events. In a situation where there is a growing number of problems in society, this situation is also reflected in the life of the family. This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought major social and economic changes to the daily lives of families and their members. The pandemic has affected the whole spectrum of social life in society, disrupting social solidarity and social justice and negatively affecting the social development of individuals. An effort to stop the spread of the pandemic in many countries have led to mandated social isolation. Several measures were introduced to prevent the spread of the disease, the most significant of which was the lockdown, which prevented immediate contact between people outside their homes. In most cases, communication moved to the online environment of social networks, which were the only means of communication between relatives and friends. The lack of face-to-face social contact has had a negative impact, disrupting social relations between people, worsening interpersonal relations, social alienation, loss of empathy, loss of the ability to compromise, increased insecurity, nervousness and psychological problems for individuals and society. The pandemic, by bringing about major social and economic changes, changes in the daily lives of families and their members, has also significantly affected the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. How this was reflected in families is reported by A, Št'astná (2021) in a pilot study of the Contemporary Czech Family project, in which 1300 respondents were surveyed to determine grandparents' help in caring for grandchildren

before and during the pandemic. More than half (58%) reported that grandparents cared for their grandchildren as often as they did before the pandemic. A proportion of respondents (16%) reported that grandparents reduced help during the pandemic or stopped helping altogether (10 %). The reason for limiting contact with grandparents was stated to be fear of infecting them with the virus and thus endangering their lives. Several said that although they see their grandparents less, they try to communicate with them online through social networking sites and the telephone. This attitude was mainly due to the fact that the seniors were identified as one of the most vulnerable groups in terms of contracting the virus during the pandemic. Limiting face-to-face contact between grandparents and grandchildren impoverished the social development of both children and grandparents.

Theory and practice have confirmed that grandparents are an integral part of the family and play an important role in the upbringing of grandchildren. In her research, P. Vlachova (2021), through a questionnaire (127 respondents), tested the hypothesis that grandparents have an important place in the educational influence on grandchildren in spending leisure time and in the transgenerational transmission in the family, identifying its essential elements. According to the results of the research, grandparents influence grandchildren the most in the transmission of family traditions and customs (85 %), in second place educationally they guide behavior towards other people and in society (70.4 %), they also have a considerable influence on the formation and development of interests (59.3 %). The above results document that intergenerational transmission in the family contributes significantly to the socialization of children and the development of their personality. Grandparents are an important part of this intergenerational transmission and educational influence, (Rabušicová, M., et al., 2011). The variety and number of connections in the functional leisure time of the elderly with their grandchildren expands the child's space. Everything oscillates around the consciousness of cooperation and support and assistance, which is not quite common today, yet plays an important role in the formation of social contacts linking elements of family-senior relationships. Their action is only supportive, but there are more and more frequent cases when grandparents are involved in cooperation and when they are a great boon for the child and for his/her main caregivers (Matějček, Z., Dytrych, Z., 1997). According to the survey results, the most common reason for grandparents' contact with their grandchildren is to help the parents with the care and care of their grandchildren (59.3 %). Often parents want grandparents who would support them in raising their children, who would take care of their grandchildren occasionally or even every day, at least for a little while, with love. However, this is not always ideal. On the one hand, parents are grateful for all the times their children can be with their grandparents, but on the other hand, they are often embarrassed if they spoil them in any way. Grandparents should be especially wary of unnecessary spoiling of the child. The time spent together playing with grandchildren, reading to them, going for walks, talking or laughing is one of the most wonderful times and the more of it the better. Spoiling occurs when they buy everything for their grandchildren, allow them everything, don't keep time limits on certain activities,

are inconsistent in what they promise and eventually allow, don't give their grandchildren limits on anything. Grandparents should be united with the parents, they should in no way incite the grandchildren against the parents. It is logical that the grandchildren test whether the same rules apply at the grandparents' house as at home. It is always easier to agree on the same rules than to unnecessarily spoil relationships with children, grandchildren, daughters-in-law and sons-in-law.

Grandparents are an asset in the family, especially in the area of intergenerational interaction. The results of P. Vlachová's research 2021 show that the intention of grandparents' contact with grandchildren is also to pass on their experience and knowledge to their grandchildren (33.3 %). Children become more deeply acquainted with their family history, with their origins and create a stable identity thanks to contact with grandparents. Through stories they get to know their ancestors better, they can identify more with their family and perceive intergenerational relationships. Thanks to their grandparents, children can acquire skills that their parents cannot develop. They can get acquainted with ancient crafts, learn about ancestral values or learn about customs, for example during holidays. Grandmothers, in turn, develop their children's language skills by reading fairy tales, using rhymes and telling stories, often about their family. In adulthood, children then have more examples to draw on when they are forming their own family.

Last but not least, the reason for contact is to fill the grandparents' free time (33.3 %). Spending grandparents' free time with their grandchildren also enriches their lives. Spending time together, playing with grandchildren, reading to them, going for walks, talking or laughing, are some of the most beautiful moments and the more the better. The results of the survey show that grandparents in contact with their grandchildren feel useful and needed (44 %), being with their grandchildren allows them to pass on their knowledge and experience (29.6 %), they see their grandchildren as a continuation of their lineage (14.8%) they do not feel lonely (11.1 %) (Vlachová, P., 2021). Spending time with grandparents not only brings new stimuli, impulses and ideas for the grandchildren, but also benefits the grandparents. In fact, the relationship with grandchildren keeps grandparents more active and, according to many researches, they live longer. Children, in turn, gain a different perspective on the world; grandparents share their wisdom and rich life experiences. Maintaining a close relationship with grandparents strengthens children's relationship with the elderly – grandchildren learn how to respectfully interact with the elderly, what and how to help them, and they also have the opportunity to see the positive qualities and skills of the elderly (resilience, diligence, ability to get along, etc.). Frequent contact of grandchildren with their grandparents develops children's empathy, increases patience, tolerance and understanding towards the elderly.

CONCLUSION

As several educators and the results of the survey point out, grandparents have a legitimate place in the contemporary family, especially in the intergenerational transmission of life experiences, knowledge, traditions and, last but not least, as an important

supporting factor in the social development of grandchildren. Grandparents are becoming an important pillar and person in the process of intergenerational learning for grandchildren and are increasingly becoming active participants in it. Their presence in the family circle is indispensable in several areas. The changes in the family structure and the model of family life that are taking place at the present time call for a reminder of the importance of the role and function of grandparents in the education and initial socialization of the child within the family. Intergenerational learning, based on the development and strengthening of intergenerational relations between young people and the elderly, is also a very effective way and means of preventing undesirable social phenomena, aggressive behavior and as the most valuable social capital. The importance of a positive bond between generations for the healthy development of children and for maintaining the continuity of society is beyond debate. The participation of the elderly in the upbringing of grandchildren is, as mentioned above, beneficial in many ways, the grandchildren have support in their grandparents and for the elderly, participation in the upbringing of grandchildren gives motivation and further meaning to life. In a well-adjusted communication, the parents have significant support and help in the grandparents, which allows them job satisfaction, more room for self-fulfilment, etc. The results of the findings indicate a higher rating in the elderly in the contribution not only in the personal level but also in the social field. In the statements of the seniors there was a strong sense of usefulness and necessity for the other, as a way of coping with the processes of aging.

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