

Chapter 8

Generativity, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Mai Thi Tran, Linh Thuy Dang and Nguyen Cong Vu

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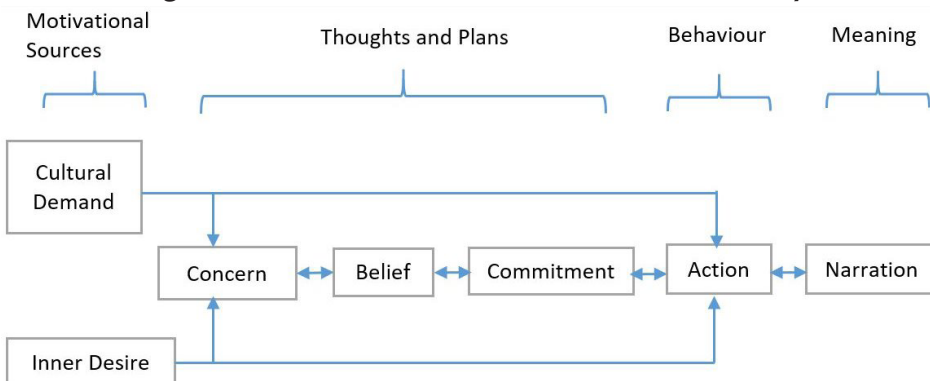
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Generativity, Attitudes, and Beliefs

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In ageing studies, the quality of life of older persons (OPs) is an important factor in maintaining one’s psychological health. To evaluate the quality of an older adult’s life, the generativity is explored. The concept of generativity was first introduced by Eric Erikson in 1950. He defined generativity as a concern for others and a need to contribute something to the next generation (Erikson, 1977). He also proposed eight stages of the life cycle from infancy to the end of one’s life. At each stage, he contrasted generativity with the stagnation that is important to human development. Later, at his eighth stage, Erikson concluded that generativity plays the most critical role in the lives of older adults. He stated that ‘indeed, old people can and need to maintain a grand-generative function’ and that ‘vital involvement .. is necessary for staying really alive’ (Erikson, 1997, p.63). Based on Erikson’s work, McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) developed a model to explain the generative process (Figure 8.1). In this model, generativity is defined as an adult’s concern for and commitment to promoting the development and well-being of future generations. Figure 8.1 demonstrates the seven features of generativity and the four interrelating concepts.

Figure 8.1. McAdams’ Seven Features of Generativity



Source: McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992, p.1005).

However, because of the demographic shift in the population, the definitions of generativity by Erickson and others may change. Nowadays, OPs have a longer lifespan, and many of them live 10 to 20 years or more after their retirement. Some of them choose to continue working whilst many choose volunteer jobs or raise their grandchildren and great grandchildren (Cheng, 2009). Hence, the definition of generativity was extended to caring for those things that are created (Urrutia et al., 2009). Generativity now plays a significant role when associated with the well-being of older adults (James and Zarret, 2006). Many studies showed its positive association with other health outcomes such as quality of life (Østbye et al., 2018), disability and mortality (Gruenewald et al., 2012), and cognitive as well as psychological well-being (An and Cooney, 2006; Maselko et al., 2014; Rothrauff and Cooney, 2008; Tabuchi et al., 2015). The fulfilment of one's generative concern (represented by the values and self-perceptions of OPs) through generative actions (participation that contributes positively to the next generation) has contributed to higher levels of life satisfaction amongst OPs (Hofer et al., 2008).

Moreover, a deeper understanding of generativity in old age helps improve the quality of life of OPs. Therefore, the measure of generativity is necessary. Several measures had been proposed to assess generativity in old age (Schoklitsch and Baumann, 2011). Generally, the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) developed by McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) is the most commonly used. The LGS is a measure of generative concern (Einolf, 2014).

There is no report about generativity in Vietnamese OPs thus far. The Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in Viet Nam (LSAHV) is, therefore, the first and a pioneer study on generativity of Vietnamese OPs. This study used the simplified version of the Loyola Generativity Scale, which includes six statements adopted from the short form of the original scale in the 1995 Midlife in the United States Survey to measure generative concern. In the LSAHV, respondents were asked to assess how often each of the following statements applies to them:

- 1) You have important skills you can pass along to others.
- 2) Many people come to you for advice.
- 3) You feel that other people need you.
- 4) You have had a good influence on the lives of other people.
- 5) You like to teach things to other people.
- 6) Others would say you have made unique contributions to society.

The responses were categorised as follows: 0 (never), 1 (occasionally/seldom), 2 (fairly often), and 3 (very often/nearly always). Then the percentage distribution and mean scores were calculated. Mean generativity score ranged from 0 to 18, with the higher score indicating a higher level of generativity. The analysis of generativity was done by age group and sex.

Figure 8.1 illustrates that concern (or attitude) and belief are two important features of generativity. In this study, the attitudes and beliefs of OPs on a range of issues, including support from children and co-residential living arrangement, were revealed. Understanding the values and preferences of OPs will help optimise the plans of physical, social, and mental intervention for this population sector. This understanding is particularly necessary in the context of the decline in traditional beliefs and attitudes driven by the influx of new ideas and social development factors such as industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and socioeconomic development. Especially associated with the change in the traditional family structure in Asia, traditional multigenerational family systems, community, and values of filial piety have weakened with increasing urbanisation (Cheng, 2015; Löckenhoff et al., 2015). As a consequence, there are the disjunctions between what the ageing parent wants and what children perceive and are willing to provide (Cheng, 2015). For example, OPs expect female family members to assume household and caretaking responsibilities, which may conflict with the changing role of females, including their increasing involvement in their work.

Generativity

Table 8.1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their responses to the generativity statements by sex and age group. Overall, Vietnamese OPs registered a mean generativity score of 4.94 from a maximum score of 18. All scores for each question are smaller than 1. They scored themselves highest on being needed by other people ($M = 0.96$) and having important skills to pass along to others ($M = 0.95$). Both items also registered the highest proportion who answered either fairly or very often/nearly always (18.2% and 19.7%, respectively). The measures of generative concern with the next highest scores are having a good influence on the lives of others ($M = 0.9$), feeling that many people rely on them for advice ($M = 0.8$), and being keen on teaching or imparting knowledge to other people ($M = 0.75$). OPs scored themselves lowest on making unique contributions to the larger society ($M = 0.58$). One in four OPs think they do not have important skills that can be passed

along to others. More than half of them (51.6%) think that others would never say they have made valuable contributions to the larger society.

Table 8.1. Generativity by Sex and Age

Loyola Generativity Scale	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
How often do the following statements apply to older person:								
You have important skills you can pass along to others								
Never	21.0	28.3		23.5	27.4	28.2		25.1
Occasionally/Seldom	54.8	55.4	n.s.	56.5	53.1	52.5	n.s.	55.2
Fairly often	23.5	16.1		19.6	19.0	18.9		19.3
Very often/Nearly always	0.7	0.2		0.4	0.5	0.4		0.4
Mean score	1.04	0.77	***	0.96	0.75	0.73	n.s.	0.95
N	2,352	2,972		2,515	0.94	439		5,324
Many people come to you for advice								
Never	27.8	35.5		30.5	33.8	36.2		32.1
Occasionally/Seldom	59.4	55.5	n.s.	58.9	54.9	53.6	n.s.	57.2
Fairly often	12.6	8.9		10.4	10.9	10.1		10.5
Very often/Nearly always	0.3	0.1		0.2	0.4	0.1		0.2
Mean score	0.88	0.74	***	0.82	0.80	0.77	n.s.	0.80
N	1,355	2,974		2,516	1,826	987		5,329
You feel that other people need you								
Never	20.6	24.9		21.1	25.0	28.3		23.0
Occasionally/Seldom	59.0	58.6	n.s.	59.6	57.2	55.9	n.s.	58.8
Fairly often	19.3	15.5		18.1	15.9	15.1		17.2
Very often/Nearly always	1.0	1.0		1.1	0.9	0.8		1.0
Mean score	1.01	0.93	***	0.99	0.96	0.91	**	0.96
N	2,353	2,974		2,517	1,824	986		5,327
You have a good influence on the lives of other people								
Never	25.9	32.3		28.0	31.1	33.3		29.5
Occasionally/Seldom	53.2	52.2	n.s.	53.0	52.2	52.0	n.s.	52.7
Fairly often	20.1	14.8		18.1	16.3	14.3		17.2
Very often/Nearly always	0.8	0.7		0.9	0.4	0.4		0.7
Mean score	0.97	0.85	***	0.92	0.91	0.85	**	0.90
N	2,351	2,974		2,515	1,825	986		5,326
You like to teach things to other people								
Never	35.0	42.0		37.9	40.7	39.7		38.9
Occasionally/Seldom	48.2	43.9	n.s.	45.7	45.5	47.3	n.s.	45.8
Fairly often	15.0	13.7		15.2	13.1	12.3		14.3
Very often/Nearly always	1.8	0.4		1.2	0.6	0.7		1.0
Mean score	0.81	0.75	n.s.	0.75	0.75	0.73	n.s.	0.75
N	2,353	2,974		2,517	1,825	985		5,327

Loyola Generativity Scale	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
Others would say you have made unique contributions to society								
Never	47.1	55.1		50.5	52.9	54.1		51.6
Occasionally/Seldom	41.9	37.4	n.s.	40.3	37.7	38.5	n.s.	39.4
Fairly often	10.2	7.0		8.4	9.1	7.2		8.4
Very often/Nearly always	0.7	0.4		0.7	0.4	0.2		0.6
Mean score	0.65	0.53	n.s.	0.58	0.59	0.55	n.s.	0.86
N	2,352	2,969		2,512	1,824	985		5,321
Mean Total	5.35	4.61	n.s.	5.01	4.94	4.75	n.s.	4.94
N	2,342	2,962		2,506	1,817	981		5,304

Sig = Statistical significance, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by PHAD using original LSAHV data.

Gender differences in generative concern are observed amongst OPs. Males outscore their female counterparts in all six generativity items: they have essential skills that they think can be handed down to the next generation ($M = 1.04$); they feel that other people need them ($M = 1.01$); they perceive themselves to be a good influence on others ($M = 0.97$); they feel many people come to them for advice ($M = 0.88$); they like to teach things to other people ($M = 0.81$); and they feel they have contributed substantially to their community ($M = 0.65$). In contrast, females consistently expressed more negative self-assessment of generativity than males. For instance, 32.3% of females think that they do not have a good influence on the lives of other people, whilst only 25.9% of males have the same thought.

Generative concern differs across age groups. Relative to the older cohorts, the youngest cohort (60–69) scored the highest in their overall mean generativity scores for five items except the item ‘they feel they have made unique contributions to society’. In terms of distribution of responses, about one in five of those in their 60s said they have a good influence on the lives of other people, in contrast to 14.7% (fairly often/very often) amongst those in the oldest age group (80+). The same pattern emerged for the other four statements in that the proportion who expressed a negative self-assessment of generative concern increases with age.

Amongst the oldest age cohort (80+), about a quarter (33.3%) said they never have a good influence on the lives of other people; the comparative figures for those in their 60s and 70s are 28.0% and 31.1%, respectively. A considerable proportion of those in their 80s felt that many people would never come to them for advice (36.2%) and that they have never made unique contributions to society (54.1%).

Attitudes and Beliefs

The attitudes and perceptions of Vietnamese OPs were revealed through their responses to the list of questions in Table 8.2. Results indicated that most of them continue to maintain the traditional beliefs pertaining to family dynamics, gender roles, and age-appropriate behaviour. Almost all OPs think their children must support and take care of aged parents (98.4%) and the proportion increases with age. However, OPs are also aware of their responsibility to their children, with 75.7% of OPs thinking that parents have the duty to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being. A large number of OPs (78.8%) support the idea that, upon their demise, their assets should go to the children who looked after them with no significant gender and age differences.

Table 8.2. Attitudes and Beliefs by Sex and Age

Attitudes and Beliefs	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
% who agree with the following statements:								
It is the child's duty to support and take care of older/aged parents.	98.2	98.5	n.s.	98.1	98.8	99.1	n.s.	98.4
It is acceptable for someone in their 60's or older to fall in love.	62.8	51.8	n.s.	59.7	54.0	47.6	n.s.	56.7
It is acceptable for someone in their 60's or older to (re)marry if they find a suitable partner.	58.7	48.4	n.s.	56.0	50.0	43.5	n.s.	52.9
It is acceptable for children who looked after their parents to inherit larger portions of their estate when they pass away	78.7	78.9	n.s.	80.3	76.1	76.7	n.s.	78.8
It is better for the elderly parent to live with a daughter than with a son.	42.5	49.3	n.s.	47.0	45.5	44.3	n.s.	46.3
Men should work for the family, and women should stay home and take care of the household.	59.1	59.0	n.s.	58.7	59.7	59.2	n.s.	59.0
It is the parents' duty to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being.	74.1	76.9	n.s.	75.6	75.3	76.8	n.s.	75.7
N	2,349	2,963		2,507	1,819	986		5,312

Attitudes and Beliefs	SEX			AGE GROUP				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Sig	60-69	70-79	80+	Sig	
Best living arrangement for older person according to respondent								
Live by themselves	12.8	14.1		13.9	14.0	11.0		13.5
Live by themselves but near one or more children	27.3	22.5		25.8	23.6	21.3		24.7
Rotate residence among children	48.1	50.2		47.9	50.5	53.1		49.3
Live with a son	8.2	9.6	n.s.	8.5	9.3	10.6	n.s.	9.0
Live with a daughter	1.5	2.3		2.1	1.7	1.9		1.9
Others	0.7	0.2		0.4	0.4	0.3		0.4
Don't know	1.4	1.1		1.4	0.4	1.8		1.2
<i>N</i>	2,354	2,977		2,519	1,825	987		5,331

Sig = Statistical significance, n.s. = not significant.

Source: Calculated by PHAD using original LSAHV data.

Furthermore, it is common for Vietnamese OPs to believe in traditional gender roles. More than half of OPs (53.7%) thought it is better to live with their son than daughter, more amongst males than females (57.5% compared to 50.7%). The proportion of OPs who prefer living with their daughter over living with their son is highest amongst the youngest age cohort (60–69), and this proportion gradually declines with age. The belief in the traditional division of labour (i.e. men should work for the family whilst women should stay at home and take care of the household) changed recently. Based on the data in Table 8.2, slightly more than half of OPs (59.0%) believe that men should work for the family and women should stay at home and take care of the household. The proportion of OPs who think so stay mostly constant by sex and age group.

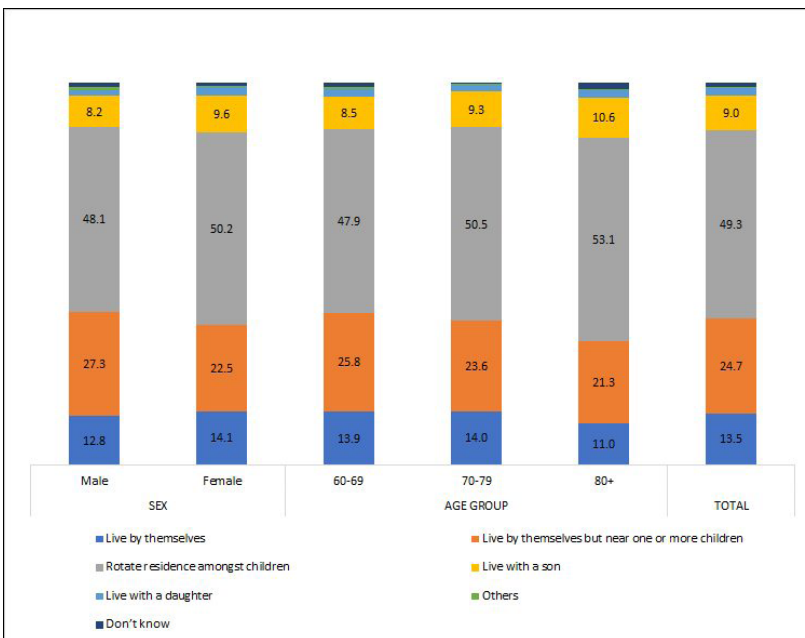
Additionally, the study explored the attitudes of OPs on romantic relationship and marriage in their 60s and older. Results show that Vietnamese OPs are more open to the idea of falling in love or (re)marrying after 60s; 56.7% think it is acceptable for someone in his/her 60s or older to fall in love, whilst 52.9% believe in (re)marrying if they find a suitable partner in their 60s and over. Males are more open than females in the belief of falling in love and getting married in their old age. For instance, 62.8% of male OPs agree that falling in love in old age is acceptable, whilst only 51.8% of females think the same. About two-thirds (58.7%) of male OPs believe that getting married in old age is a good idea whilst the proportion for females is lower (48.4%). As expected, the level of acceptance is higher amongst the younger, than the older, cohort. These findings reflect the effects of urbanisation and modernisation in Vietnamese's thoughts. The belief in traditional values is changing and may be expected to change more in the future.

Ideal Living Arrangement

As earlier discussed, OPs prefer to live with their son; however, they still think it is a good idea to rotate residence amongst children (49.3%). Furthermore, OPs perceive themselves as capable of looking after themselves. This is supported by the finding that 38.2% prefer to live alone or live by themselves but near to one or more children. This also served as an evidence of the improved health status amongst Vietnamese OPs. More females (14.1%) than males (12.8%) show their desire to live independently, whilst more males (27.3%) than females (22.5%) prefer to live alone but closer to their children (Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 shows that the patterns of ratio of attitude and belief of OPs in living arrangement are similar by sex and age group. About half of OPs prefer to live amongst their children in rotation and about a quarter prefer to live independently. More OPs desire to live with a son than a daughter (9% compared to 1.9%). This number again confirms the male preference in Viet Nam's culture.

Figure 8.2. Best Living Arrangement of Older Persons by Sex and Age (%)



Source: Calculated by PHAD using original LSAHV data.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter explored the issue of generativity in old age of Vietnamese OPs. Older Vietnamese are most predisposed to feel needed by others and have important skills to pass along to younger generations. The LSAHV revealed that OPs in their 60s have a higher level of generativity relative to their older counterparts. Men viewed themselves better on feeling recognised for their valuable contributions to society than women. Regardless of sex and age, OPs have the poorest self-assessment of their unique contributions to society.

It is a challenge to assess the country's older overall generativity given the absence of a precedent study in Viet Nam. The LSAHV served as the first study to explore and overview generative concern amongst Vietnamese OPs. Future studies could explore the factors that explain the observed variability in the generativity of OPs. To what extent are these outcomes explained by their lower education compared to the younger generation to whom they are expected to pass on their skills and knowledge? What is the role of the OPs' dependence on their children in financial, material, and instrumental support to explain the lower generativity in advanced age? What is the effect of changing roles and values over time? These are important areas to consider, as some have argued that the perception of respect and acceptance from the younger generation is imperative to the OPs' generative action (Tabuchi et al., 2015). Many of these questions can be addressed with follow-up data from a panel survey.

The LSAHV also provided OPs' views and expectations on their beliefs and attitudes. In the context of their rapidly changing environment, the traditional beliefs and attitudes on filial responsibilities, gender expectations, and age-appropriate behaviours are gradually changing. Results showed strong support for an intergenerational contract (Croll, 2006) between parents and their children under which children are obliged to take responsibility for their ageing parents in exchange for their parents' sacrifices for them. Results of the 2018 LSAHV also reflected this gendered pattern of filial expectation.

When asked if they would be better off living with a son or a daughter, a higher proportion of OPs are keen to live with their sons rather than their daughters, whilst some of them still prefer to live with all children on rotation. Recently, more Vietnamese OPs prefer to live independently and believe that household responsibilities are given to both women and men.

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