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VALUES IN PARENT–CHILD RELATIONSHIP: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS

Abstract. This study examines the continuity and variability of family axiology around parent–child relationships across three generations in Vietnamese family settings. We designed a questionnaire to assess identification with traditional family values and learn how these values are interpreted. To this end, we surveyed 260 people from three age groups. The results show that the elderly are more inclined towards traditional family values. The middle-aged group tends to emphasise the responsibility of caring for the family. In contrast, the youngest group had the least rigid understanding of the parent–child relationship. The youth approved of a child’s independence from parents, reluctance to have many children, and not holding the birth of a son as critical. The results



Received: 7.08.2024; verified: 23.09.2024. Accepted: 31.10.2024

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illustrated both continuity and variability of the family values held by the three generations. Many of the findings apply not only to Vietnam but also to a number of other countries.

Keywords: parent–child relationships, family values, intergenerational differences, differences in the conception of related values.

WARTOŚCI W RELACJACH RODZIC–DZIECKO: CIĄGŁOŚĆ I ZMIANY W TRZECH POKOLENIACH

Abstrakt. Celem niniejszego badania jest wyjaśnienie ciągłości i zmian w wartościach rodzinnych poprzez porównanie wartości dotyczących relacji rodzic–dziecko w trzech pokoleniach w wietnamskich rodzinach. Na podstawie identyfikacji tradycyjnych wartości rodzinnych zaprojektowano kwestionariusz dotyczący różnych aspektów tych wartości, a następnie przeprowadzono badanie z udziałem 260 osób reprezentujących trzy grupy wiekowe. Wyniki pokazują, że grupa osób starszych jest bardziej skłonna do podtrzymywania tradycyjnych wartości rodzinnych. Grupa w średnim wieku kładzie większy nacisk na odpowiedzialność za opiekę nad rodziną, podczas gdy grupa młodsza ma najbardziej otwarte podejście do relacji rodzic–dziecko, uwzględniające takie wartości jak: niezależność dziecka od rodziców, niechęć do posiadania wielu dzieci oraz brak szczególnego nacisku na konieczność posiadania syna. Wyniki ilustrują zarówno ciągłość, jak i zmiany w wartościach rodzinnych w trzech pokoleniach, a wiele z ustaleń odnosi się nie tylko do Wietnamu, ale również do wielu innych krajów.

Słowa kluczowe: relacje rodzic–dziecko, wartości rodzinne, różnice międzypokoleniowe, różnice w pojmowaniu powiązanych wartości.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Previous studies of intergenerational differences regarding family relationships and values

Numerous studies have been conducted on the intergenerational differences in family values. These studies fall into two groups: studies tracing the differences between countries and studies devoted to general developmental tendencies and relationships in families based in countries with different levels of socioeconomic development.

Liu and colleagues (2000) compared the concept of filial piety among young and old members of 100 Chinese families living in New Zealand. The results showed that filial duty was still strongly accepted in both groups despite the vast geographical distance between the two countries. Le Van Hao (2016), in his comparison between parents and children in Vietnam, showed that both generations had high ratings for the value of ‘respect’ (the average score was 4,88 on a 5-point scale), while the lowest value was for ‘obedience’ (average score was 4,07) in the six expressions of filial piety (namely: caring, financial help, respect, obedience, making parents happy, and maintaining relationships with parents). Kobayashi

and colleagues (2010) studied 100 Japanese parent-child dyads living in Canada using semi-structured interviews with a focus on intergenerational perceptions of the value of filial duty. Results showed that despite significant differences in acculturation experiences, both generations rated filial duty as an important value in the family.

Upon studying differences between three generations, Zhou and colleagues (2017) collected data on how grandmothers assessed themselves, their children and their grandchildren (aged 4–6 years) in terms of autonomy, curiosity, self-expression, obedience, and shyness. According to the results, the grandmothers noticed an intergenerational increase in autonomy, curiosity, and self-expression. By contrast, the signs of obedience and shyness gradually decreased over generations. Continuing research based on a comparison of age groups, Sun Wha Ok and Meejung Chin (2011) tried to clarify attitudes to traditional rituals in Korean families in three cohorts: 1) people born between 1941 and 1950 (aged 59–68); 2) those born between 1951 and 1970 (aged 39–58); 3) and those born after 1971 (aged 38 or less). These three generations were described as: post-colonial, modern, and Korean information era, respectively. They established that traditional family rituals relating to childbirth had been maintained over many generations. However, ancestor worship was rarely practised by younger generations.

Kostromina and her colleagues (2018) focused on value orientations and moral feelings evinced by three generations constituting the same Russian families within a sample of 310 people. The findings revealed an intergenerational decrease in the importance of the values of security, tradition, and conformity, together with an increase in the salience of values such as independence, novelty and achievements. The pattern with regard to the value of shame showed that the youngest and intermediate generations were more likely to associate shame with condemnation by society, a sense of embarrassment and discomfort, and a mismatch between morality, upbringing and overstepping a norm. By comparison, the older generation mostly associated shame with doing something wrong or lacking competence. They also construed shame in connection with a feeling of awkwardness and violation of norms, but, unlike the juniors, they were less likely to associate shame with condemnation on the part of society.

The above studies concerned the contrasts between generations. Other studies focused on the impact of external factors on intergenerational relationships. Majid Kaffashi and colleagues (2011) clarified the influence of social and cultural factors on the generation gap in Tehran families. Five hundred people living in Tehran were selected for a questionnaire survey. The study's results revealed that social and cultural factors were linked to intergenerational differences within the family. Specifically, factors such as lifestyle, place of residence, parents' social status, and access to mass media had differential effects on the generations. It was found that an increase in the parents' use of modern media correlated with a less imposing

attitude towards their children in matters of learning, hobbies, and private life. Furthermore, the more the children used social networks and mass media, the less they participated in religious rituals. These results confirmed that social and cultural factors affect intergenerational relationships within the family. The study concluded that both parents and children should increase their understanding of each other and use social networks appropriately. Yang Zhou (2023) interviewed 20 households, including 11 with elderly residents. This research was conducted in 2014 over 8 months in the Chinese province of Guangdong. It sought to clarify conflicts between generations with shared residential space. The study identified three cohabitation models: intermediary-controlled, that is, where a family member acted as an intermediary to regulate relationships between other family members; formal democratic model, where couples lived separately from their parents; and excessive participation model, where parents intervened and made decisions for the child's family, for example, when parents dealt with newborn arrangements. Zhou's results showed that the former model was the main cause of family conflicts. The research helped to identify new models of family life coordination across generations.

These key studies sought to clarify the different values around the parent-child relationship held by three generations. The diversity shown in these studies reflected the multidimensionality of values in the parent-child relationship. The following observations can be made. Firstly, these studies often focused on a single or just a few specific aspects of the parent-child relationship (such as filial piety, independence, etc.) but failed to consider the full system of family values in the parent-child relationship. This rendered the research findings incomplete. Secondly, family values in the parent-child relationship carry cultural significance, reflecting cultural identity as well as their continuity or variability across time. Therefore, to fully understand these cultural values, we must consider them comprehensively, not just focus on specific values. Thirdly, only a few studies have compared family values in parent-child relationships across three generations. Even fewer have focused on traditional values to explore their different perceptions. We suggest that studying all three generations is particularly valuable in forwarding our understanding of each generation's values in modern society.

In this study, we argue that family values are meaningful, useful, and important constructs in parent-child relationships. These values can be objectified because they have existed in the culture independently of any particular family. Filial piety constitutes a good example, as it is the most important value in East Asian families influenced by Confucian ideology and has been influential for over two thousand years (Shwalb et al., 2009). This influence is independent of whether the family members are aware of the value, and each person may have their own experience of the effect of filial piety. In brief, there are specific values that can be objectified. Likewise, differences between respondents may be subject to objective

examination. This article centres on the family values expressed around parent-child relationships.

This study attempted to examine two questions:

(1) What values did the participants rate highest in regard to parent-child relationships?

(2) What were the values-related differences related to parent-child relationships across the three generations?

We adopted the following hypothesis:

(1) Participants should generally place considerable importance on traditional values, such as filial piety, attachment, and mutual support in the family.

(2) Each generation holds relatively different concepts of values related to parent-child relationships, with the youngest group being more open and accepting of new values than the older groups.

2. METHOD AND PARTICIPANTS

We looked for existing scales appropriate for a survey of values held by different generations as per parent-child relationships. However, we were unable to identify any suitable ones. Accordingly, we devised our own questionnaire on the topic, incorporating the implications of the work on Vietnamese family cultural values by Dao Duy Anh (1938), Phan Ke Binh (1915) and Pham Viet Long (2004). Based on this material, we identified the basic values underlying the parent-child relationship in the Vietnamese family. The above included parental sacrifice and care of their children, children's reliance on their parents, the reliance of elderly parents on their children, filial piety, the delight of having many children, and the significance of having a son for continuing the family line. The questionnaire was designed around the foregoing fundamental points and covered a range of values relevant to parent-child relationships. For example, the value of filial piety was expressed in the following claims: *'Children must care for and nurture their parents'*, *'Children respect their parents but do not necessarily obey them'*, *'Filial piety is a burden for children'*, and *'Parents should live on their own or in nursing homes when they get old'*. In other words, objectively existing values (filial piety, sacrifice, care, giving birth, etc.) were identified as part of the study, and their distinct subjective concepts were analysed. These subjective concepts could be different, even opposing (for instance, the desire to give birth to a son and the desire to give birth to a daughter). Lastly, the questionnaire included 29 items grouped into six categories/themes. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a five-point scale, how much they Disagreed (1) or Agreed (5) with each item.

One-way ANOVA in SPSS was used to compare the notions of family values of the three age groups. A standard level of significance beyond 0.05 was used.

The survey was conducted in Vietnam with the participation of 260 people, of which 200 lived in Thanh Hoa (102 in rural and 98 in urban locations), and 60 resided in the capital city of Ha Noi. The culture of Thanh Hoa exhibits a unique interaction between influences from the north and those from the Nghe Tinh – Hue area to the south. According to Tran Thi An (2016), Thanh Hoa has a combination of characteristics of the coastal, midland, and mountainous regions. Ha Noi was chosen because it has been the country's capital for a thousand years, and it is believed that many Vietnamese values, which were absorbed from China and India, are preserved there. In addition, Ha Noi is the second largest city in Vietnam and exemplifies the rapid socioeconomic developmental changes that are thought to affect the values held by the population. Participants were provided an explanation of the research design and purpose before asking for their consent.

Each participant provided demographic data, including age, gender, and place of residence. The sample was divided into three age groups: below 40 years old (Young), 40–60 years old (Middle-Aged) and over 60 years old (Old). These three age groups served to distinguish the respective generations because each generation has distinct primary activities and cognitive, emotional and personality characteristics. Within the age range of 20–40, people develop life values, take on the responsibility for their own family, start to work and develop their careers. From 40 to 60, the main activities feature working, redefining life values, and caring for their family, children and elderly parents. This is also the stage when people accumulate expertise and affirm their position in their family and society. Beyond 60, core activities include rest. The scope of social relationships gradually narrows down, and the focus is more on children and family. Health gradually declines (Truong, 2023). The characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA were used to compare the notions of family values of the three age groups. A standard level of significance of 0.05 was used. The analyses were conducted with the SPSS package.

Two scientific councils, one at the Institute of Psychology and one at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, approved the content and the ethical principles of the research.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

	Characteristics	<i>N</i>
Gender	Male	116
	Female	144
Age	Young (< 39 year old)	84
	Middle-age (40–60 year old)	86
	Elderly (> 60 year old)	90
Place of residence	Rural	130
	Urban	130
City/province	Ha Noi	60
	Thanh Hoa	200
Education level	Primary and secondary school	34
	High school	126
	Vocational school, college, university	100
Number of children in family	No children	52
	One	24
	Two	128
	Three and more	56

3. RESULTS

3.1. Values related to parent–child relationships

The results presented in this section provide an overview of the concepts of values. Table 2 shows scores (presented as means and standard deviations) assigned to family-related values as represented by all questionnaire items.

Regarding parents' sacrifice for their children in Group I, it can be seen that the highest average score corresponded to the item expressing the parents' need to have their own lives and careers and not sacrifice everything for their children ($M = 4.33$, only the numerals are provided regarding this variable in the following portion of the article). The item capturing very traditional content, 'Parents devote everything to their children', had a lower average score (4.23). This showed that the respondents' approach to caring for offspring had become more balanced. The parents' boundless and unconditional sacrifice for their children was still considered of great importance, but it was not the most important value.

Table 2. Number, mean and standard deviation of responses to the questionnaire grouped by main themes

Main Groups	Specific Statements	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
I – Parental sacrifice for and care-taking of children	Parents devote everything to their children	260	4.23	1.01
	Parents have their own lives and careers, and do not have to sacrifice everything for their children	260	3.51	1.12
	Parents need to have a balance between children, career, family and work	260	4.33	0.79
II – Reliance by elderly parents on their children	Elderly parents have to rely on their children	260	4.07	0.98
	Elderly parents already have pensions and assets saved, and do not necessarily rely on their children	260	3.52	1.16
	Children still have many burdens with their own lives, so parents have to take care of themselves	260	3.10	1.30
III – Reliance by children on their parents	When young, children rely on their parents' care	260	4.48	0.75
	Children live with their parents until they start their own family	260	3.87	1.08
	Parents support their children by working and providing a home	260	3.88	0.99
	Children can be independent of their parents and live their own lives	260	3.89	0.96
	Children over 18 years old should not live with their parents	260	3.67	1.07
IV – Filial piety	Children have duties, and should be grateful to their parents, that is morally right	260	4.68	0.76
	Children may have to work far from their homes or are concerned with their own lives, so that they can care for and support their parents, but they do not necessarily have to nurture them	260	3.65	1.12
	Children have the responsibility to take care of their parents	260	4.32	0.85
	Children respect their parents but do not necessarily obey them	260	3.29	1.23
	Filial piety is a burden for children	260	2.52	1.31
	When getting old, parents should live independently with their children or go to old peoples' homes, where the children only visit their parents	260	2.83	1.27
	Children love their parents, but that doesn't mean they always have to ask them for their opinions or listen to their parents	260	3.41	1.17

Main Groups	Specific Statements	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
V – General ideas about childhood	Children provide happiness and joy for parents and grandparents	260	4.64	0.72
	Having many children and grandchildren makes a happy family	260	3.87	1.11
	Many people don't want to have children because it's expensive and there is not enough time to also have work or a career	260	2.78	1.13
	People should have children so that they can rely on them in old age	260	3.58	1.21
	People should have children for company and to share their life with	260	3.93	1.00
	Having children makes parents feel that life is meaningful	260	4.41	0.86
VI – Importance of having at least one son	Families must have a son to continue the family line, and worship their ancestors	260	3.00	1.28
	Sons are more valuable than daughters; a daughter leaves the family when she marries	260	2.37	1.16
	Parents want to have a daughter because girls are more emotionally sensitive than boys	260	2.90	1.16
	A child's gender is not important, but nevertheless having a son offers greater security	260	3.32	1.25
	Parents want to have both a son and a daughter	260	4.34	0.95

Items in Group II (reliance on children) had lower scores (ranging from 3.1 to 4.07). Further, the idea that parents should receive pensions and accumulate assets so as not to rely on their children obtained a slightly higher average (3.52). This statement clearly departed from the traditional view that elderly parents should stay with their children, likely indicating a change in seniors' reliance on their children.

Turning to Group III (reliance on parents), we can see that, as was to be expected, the claim 'Children in their vulnerable years, when they need protection, rely on their parents' care' received the highest average score (4.48). However, the parent-child relationship proved to be nuanced, for we found that the statement 'Children can be independent of their parents and live their own way' had the second highest average score within its group (3.89). Differences in trends within Group III included: 'Children live with their parents until they have their own family' (3.87) and 'Children over 18 years old should not live with their parents' (3.67). These two items revealed discrepant notions of children's independence as well as parents' support for their children. We believe that these diverse notions captured the intertwining and multidimensional nature of today's values and trends concerning personal choices.

Group IV, which concerned filial piety, contained the item with the highest score in the entire Table, proving that it has always remained one of the top values. In this group, we could see evidence of more recent social changes, consisting in a tendency for children to care for and encourage their parents, although this did not mean sustenance (3.65). Another novel social development was that children respect their parents but do not necessarily obey them (3.29). These high mean scores reflected the characteristics of family relationships today. Each generation has developed professional independence and expertise, allowing its members to work away from their families. Hence, the expression of filial piety proved to be evolving.

The next Group (V) contained more disparate items. The highest scores were given to the following items: 'Children bring happiness to a family' (4.64) and 'Having children makes parents feel that life is meaningful' (4.41). The benefit of having children for emotion-sharing purposes (3.93) was acknowledged as well. In contrast, the idea that having children may interfere with pursuing a career was not endorsed (2.78). It seemed that a birth in the family still brings great joy for all concerned. While the necessity of relying on children in old age was not so pronounced, the responses still averaged from 3.41 to 4.2. This pointed to the fact that generations continue to be interdependent despite changes in socioeconomic conditions. As determined in the outline of previous items, care and support for parents had high average response rates across all age groups, while the proposal that it is acceptable for parents to live in nursing homes had low average responses. We were in a position to obtain a broader picture of children's role in the family. Namely, parents were thought to have children for the joy and happiness they bring to the family, without expecting them to care for the parents when they are elderly. However, the notion of filial piety and intergenerational attachment still prevailed.

The final Group (VI) concerned the importance of having a son to continue the family line, which is a popular belief in Vietnam and other Asian countries. The survey results showed a considerable drop in the support for the claims relevant to the family's need for a son to continue its line and ancestor worship. Having a son was no longer a must! However, the two notions with the highest average scores in this group were: 'Parents want to have both a son and a daughter' (4.34) and 'A child's gender is not important. Nevertheless, having a son offers greater security' (3.32). These findings corroborated the prevalence of the desire to have a son, albeit no longer as compelling as in the past.

In summary, our findings on the parent-child relationship provided grounds for the claim that, apart from traditional and widely accepted viewpoints, the respective generations adopted novel attitudes to attachment and independence. These reflected the changes in present-day society. Clarifying the common view provided a basis for comparing the values held by different generations.

These results brought an answer to the first research question about the general approach to family values in the parent–child relationship. Although core traditional values in the family were preserved, novel attitudes were shown to have emerged. For instance, the balance between sacrifice and mutual parent–child gained traction, with lesser support for filial piety and a preference for sons. The above also confirmed the first research hypothesis of this study.

3.2. Comparison of values related to parent–child relationships held by three generations

The next part presents concepts of values in more detail. The continuity and variability of values (expressed in different notions of each value) are approached from the perspective of three different generations.

With regard to the items in Group I – parents’ sacrifice for and care of children – it could be seen that the result for the three statements indicated strong confirmation. The ‘Young’ group had the lowest average score ($M = 4.01$, only the numerals are provided regarding this variable in the following portion of the article), while the ‘Middle’ group had the highest average score (4.41). There was a significant difference between the three groups ($p < 0.05$). This statement expressed a traditional view that conformed to Vietnamese culture. However, the youngest generation gave fewer positive responses. The middle generation (40–60 years old) had the highest mean, which was potentially related to bringing up children while still relating to their parents. In this time interval, devotion to children constantly occupied their thoughts amid efforts to fulfil their duties towards both preceding and succeeding generations. As per I, the respective generations’ scores proved different by a wide margin with regard to their own lives and careers and the lack of the requirement to sacrifice everything for their children. The highest result belonged to the ‘Old’ group, ‘Middle’ came next, and the ‘Young’ scored lowest. It is interesting that these scores were much lower, potentially reflecting the diversity of the evaluation of family values in the family.

Within Group II (parents’ ultimate reliance on their children), the young generation had the lowest average score regarding the claim that ‘Elderly parents must rely on their children’ (3.82). Once again, this showed the young generation’s openness and deviation from traditional notions.

Table 3. Comparison of three age groups on values held in matters of parent–child relationships

Main Groups	Specific Statements	Generation	N	Mean (SD)	F, df, p
I – Parental sacrifice for, and care-taking of, children	Parents devote everything to their children	Young	84	4.01 (0.97)	$F(2, 257) = 3.323, p = 0.03$
		Middle	86	4.41 (0.91)	$(3) < (2), p = 0.15$
		Old	90	4.26 (1.11)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.14$
	Parents have their own lives and careers, and do not have to sacrifice everything for their children	Young	84	3.30 (1.11)	$F(2, 257) = 3.375, p = 0.03$
		Middle	86	3.49 (1.07)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.16$
		Old	90	3.73 (1.14)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.16$
	Parents need to have a balance between children, career, family, and work	Young	84	4.29 (0.91)	$F(2, 257) = 0.77, p = 0.46$
		Middle	86	4.28 (0.73)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.54$
		Old	90	4.41 (0.73)	$(2) < (1), p = 1.00$
II – Reliance by elderly parents on their children	Elderly parents have to rely on their children	Young	84	3.82 (0.90)	$F(2, 257) = 4.686, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	4.12 (1.04)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.68$
		Old	90	4.27 (0.95)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.14$
	Elderly parents already have pensions and assets saved, and do not necessarily rely on their children	Young	84	3.60 (1.04)	$F(2, 257) = 1.198, p = 0.30$
		Middle	86	3.36 (1.26)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.47$
		Old	90	3.60 (1.16)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.46$
	Children still have many burdens with their own lives, so parents have to take care of themselves	Young	84	2.55 (1.25)	$F(2, 257) = 24.776, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	2.91 (1.24)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	3.79 (1.10)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.17$

III – Reliance by children on their parents	When young, children rely on their parents' care	Young	84	4.13 (0.86)	$F(2, 257) = 14.965, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	4.66 (0.60)	$(3) < (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	4.64 (0.67)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.01$
	Children live with their parents until they have their own family	Young	84	3.43 (1.09)	$F(2, 257) = 11.635, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.98 (1.02)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.52$
		Old	90	4.17 (1.01)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.01$
	Parents support their children in work, and home	Young	84	3.54 (0.98)	$F(2, 257) = 8.924, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.94 (0.99)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.41$
		Old	90	4.14 (0.90)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.02$
	Children can be independent of their parents and live their own lives	Young	84	3.79 (0.99)	$F(2, 257) = 7.110, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.69 (0.97)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	4.19 (0.84)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.88$
	Children over 18 years old should not live with their parents	Young	84	3.67 (1.10)	$F(2, 257) = 1.016, p = 0.36$
		Middle	86	3.55 (1.03)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.38$
		Old	90	3.78 (1.08)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.84$

Table 3. (continued)

Main Groups	Specific Statements	Generation	N	Mean (SD)	F, df, p
IV – Filial piety	Children have duties, and should be grateful, to their parents, that is morally right	Young	84	4.65 (0.78)	$F(2, 257) = 0.344, p = 0.71$
		Middle	86	4.73 (0.65)	$(3) < (2), p = 0.82$
		Old	90	4.64 (0.83)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.86$
	Children may have to work far from their homes or are concerned with their own lives, so that they can care for and support their parents, but they do not necessarily have to nurture them	Young	84	3.43 (1.21)	$F(2, 257) = 3.355, p = 0.03$
		Middle	86	3.63 (1.14)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.36$
		Old	90	3.87 (0.98)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.61$
	Children have the responsibility to take care of their parents	Young	84	4.42 (0.85)	$F(2, 257) = 1.112, p = 0.33$
		Middle	86	4.22 (0.87)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.86$
		Old	90	4.31 (0.84)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.36$
	Children respect their parents but do not necessarily obey them	Young	84	3.12 (1.17)	$F(2, 257) = 1.175, p = 0.31$
		Middle	86	3.37 (1.22)	$(3) = (2), p = 1.00$
		Old	90	3.37 (1.28)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.43$
	Filial piety is a burden for children	Young	84	2.36 (1.35)	$F(2, 257) = 5.424, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	2.29 (1.18)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	2.88 (1.34)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.98$
	When they get old, parents should live on their own or in nursing homes where the children only visit their parents	Young	84	2.52 (1.26)	$F(2, 257) = 5.399, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	2.79 (1.21)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.17$
		Old	90	3.14 (1.26)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.41$
	Children love their parents, but that doesn't mean they always have to ask them for their opinions or listen to their parents	Young	84	3.25 (1.22)	$F(2, 257) = 2.019, p = 0.14$
		Middle	86	3.37 (1.05)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.46$
		Old	90	3.60 (1.22)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.86$

V – General ideas about childhood	Children provide happiness and joy for parents and grandparents	Young	84	4.51 (0.82)	$F(2, 257) = 4.569, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	4.58 (0.75)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.48$
		Old	90	4.82 (0.53)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.92$
	Having many children and grandchildren makes a happy family	Young	84	3.79 (1.01)	$F(2, 257) = 0.345, p = 0.71$
		Middle	86	3.91 (1.08)	$(3) = (2), p = 1.00$
		Old	90	3.91 (1.25)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.83$
	Many people don't want to have children because it's expensive and there is not enough time to also have work or a career	Young	84	3.04 (1.16)	$F(2, 257) = 3.516, p = 0.03$
		Middle	86	2.59 (1.04)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.85$
		Old	90	2.71 (1.16)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.03$
	People should have children so that they can rely on them in old age	Young	84	3.32 (1.15)	$F(2, 257) = 9.985, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.36 (1.18)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	4.02 (1.17)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.99$
	People should have children for company and to share their life with	Young	84	3.76 (1.03)	$F(2, 257) = 5.644, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.80 (0.99)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	4.21 (0.91)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.99$
	Having children makes parents feel that life is meaningful	Young	84	4.26 (0.95)	$F(2, 257) = 2.520, p = 0.08$
		Middle	86	4.41 (0.84)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.54$
		Old	90	4.56 (0.78)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.65$

Table 3. (continued)

Main Groups	Specific Statements	Generation	N	Mean (SD)	F, df, p
VI – Importance of having at least one son	Families must have a son to continue the family line, and worship their ancestors	Young	84	2.64 (1.11)	$F(2, 257) = 7.014, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	2.99 (1.29)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.18$
		Old	90	3.36 (1.33)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.18$
	Sons are more valuable than daughters; a daughter leaves the family when she marries	Young	84	2.26 (1.26)	$F(2, 257) = 1.189, p = 0.30$
		Middle	86	2.33 (1.06)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.56$
		Old	90	2.52 (1.16)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.97$
	Parents want to have a daughter because girls are more emotionally sensitive than boys	Young	84	2.85 (1.14)	$F(2, 257) = 5.184, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	2.65 (1.07)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.01$
		Old	90	3.20 (1.22)	$(2) < (1), p = 0.58$
	A child's gender is not important, but nevertheless having a son offers greater security	Young	84	2.86 (1.30)	$F(2, 257) = 11.003, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	3.36 (1.11)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.12$
		Old	90	3.71 (1.18)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.02$
	Parents want to have both a son and a daughter	Young	84	4.08 (1.11)	$F(2, 257) = 5.605, p = 0.01$
		Middle	86	4.37 (0.88)	$(3) > (2), p = 0.38$
		Old	90	4.56 (0.79)	$(2) > (1), p = 0.17$

Among the statements in Group II, it could be seen that the oldest generation had the highest average score regarding two statements: ‘Parents devote everything to their children’ (4.26) and ‘Children have many burdens... parents have to take care of themselves’ (3.79). Correspondingly, the youngest generation scored lowest in this regard. In other words, young people did not uphold the traditional belief that seniors should solely rely on their children. However, they did not waive the responsibility for caring for elderly parents. On the one hand, this testified to the sustained nature of family values. On the other, it served as proof that general life axiology and family values are intertwined and underwent constant change.

Within Group III (parental support and children’s independence), a number of statements showed statistically significant differences between the three age groups. The statement ‘Young children rely on their parents’ had the highest average score in the middle-aged group (4.66). The reasons behind this state of the matter were provided in the discussion of Group I items. It is appropriate for parents in this age range to highly value duty and sacrifice. In addition, the statements ‘Children live with their parents until they start their own family’ and ‘Parents support their children by with work and home’ had common characteristics: the young generation scored the lowest average, with the oldest rating the highest. Thus, the young generation proved to follow standards of greater independence in their lives, relying less on their parents.

Filial piety (Group IV items) is highly appreciated in Vietnamese families. This is also the case in other Asian countries. Among the seven statements pertaining to filial piety, three showed statistically significant differences between the three generations ($p < 0.05$). The statements in Group IV tapped into different aspects of the traditional view of filial piety (children’s respect, gratitude, and care for their parents). The common denominator between them was the focus on children’s professional and life autonomy, meaning they did not necessarily live with or care for their parents. As per the two statements with significant differences, the oldest generation had the highest average score, indicating the seniors’ partiality towards filial piety. The seniors had the highest acceptance of the burden on children associated with filial piety. This indicated that filial piety, a seemingly immutable concept, had changed in today’s society.

The older generation infallibly received the highest average score related to the statements about the role of children (Group V, items with $p < 0.05$), with the middle-aged generation in the second position and the youngest – in the third position.

For example, the average scores for the statement ‘Children provide happiness and joy for parents and grandparents’ in the three groups (Old, Middle, and Young) were 4.82, 4.58, and 4.51, respectively. Thus, the older generation in the survey looked towards their children and grandchildren for their own happiness. One salient implication of this finding was that visits from children and

grandchildren and the closeness of children and grandchildren bring considerable joy to the elderly.

The results for the Group VI statements (importance of having sons) were similar. The seniors scored highest in items with statistically significant differences between the three generations, while the 'Young' group's scores were the lowest. Thus, we could see that the preference for sons, a perseverant psychological characteristic of Vietnamese families (UNFPA, 2011), was subject to alteration. Young people show a lesser preference for sons than their grandparents. Clearly, this was a positive tendency in the transition towards gender equality, helping ensure a more equitable gender balance.

Considering the outcome of the comparative analysis of the responses provided by the three groups, there were signs of the evolution towards greater independence of both parents and children, who sought to limit dependence and self-sacrifice. Filial piety, an important value and 'the top of a hundred virtues' (Dao Duy Anh, 1938/2021), upheld its core status. However, the seniors realised its burden for their children. The preference for sons seemed to decline in the youngest group. The results of this section had implications for answering the second research question. They also confirmed the research hypothesis concerning the differences between the respective age groups. We managed to establish a shift in family values across the different living generations.

4. DISCUSSION

The results presented above show differences and similarities between the three generations under consideration. This reflects the concurrent continuity and variability of the values under study. It is part of the Vietnamese culture to make sacrifices for children and prioritise them. It continues to be a living family tradition (Mai Van Hai, 2017a), as was affirmed in our sample. However, representatives of the younger generation are more oriented towards balancing career and self-sacrifice for the sake of family.

With regard to having children, Le Van Hao and colleagues (2022) showed in their research devoted to the reasons for starting a family that the majority of respondents claimed having children was a joy and offspring was not considered to be a source of support in the old age. In line with previous studies, our results also corroborated the decline in the reliance on children in old age.

In traditional Vietnamese families, elderly parents always stay with their children, primarily with the firstborn son. In addition, Vietnamese culture highly prizes collectivity and interdependence (Nguyen, Williams, 1989; Hofstede, 2011). By contrast, nowadays, children commonly migrate to major cities to live and work far from their homes. The above closely corresponds to our results for

statements about intergenerational independence. It seems that modern society increasingly approves of children's independence, a trend present not just in this study but also in studies in Western countries. For example, the report of the British Social Security Advisory Committee on the likelihood of children living independently from their parents (2018) showed that, out of the 7.3 million young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK, approximately 30% (2.2 million) live away from their parents or guardians. Park and Lau (2016) used data from the European Values Study (EVS, 2011) and the World Values Survey (WVS, 2009), as well as National socioeconomic data (World Bank Group, 2014), to evaluate how the country's socioeconomic status shapes parents' assessments and prioritisation of child-rearing values. Cumulatively, results grouped by nations show that child independence is more common in rich and highly educated populations, while obedience is more common in poorer countries with lower educational levels and more rural populations (Park, Lau, 2016). The following studies help elucidate the differences between the three generations of our research with regard to the value ascribed to independence.

The studies of filial piety conducted since the early 20th century, such as those of Dao Duy Anh (1938/2021) and Phan Ke Binh (1915/2021), affirmed that it is prioritised over hundreds of human virtues in the Vietnamese family culture. This seems to be reflected in our finding of the high appreciation of filial piety among all three generations. Here, we see the continuation of the value of filial piety in Vietnamese families. Furthermore, the oldest generation in this study acknowledged that children can live independently and that filial piety does not mean that children have to support and live near their parents. This shows a more flexible attitude towards this traditionally noble and sacred value. In fact, older people's self-determination and independence are considered factors that allow older people to lead happier lives (Bölenius et al., 2019). These findings are consistent with the concept of children's independence presented in the results above. Duong Thi Nhat Anh and colleagues (2016) also pointed out in their research on filial piety in Korea and Vietnam that children pursue their own careers, may need to be away from home, and have many expenses for their own personal and family life. In such cases, filial piety could be manifested by visiting and telephoning, and not necessarily by providing money for or staying with parents. Clearly, this value has evolved from its past rendition, implying living with parents and taking care of them in old age. Traditionally, people appointed as mandarins in distant locations could ask for dismissal due to their duty to care for their parents (Dao Duy Anh, 1938/1921). In their research on filial piety and family happiness, Mai Van Hai and Le Van Hao (2024) also demonstrated that filial piety today needs to be seen as a two-way phenomenon (reciprocal filial piety), not just unidirectional in which parents are seen as central (authoritarian filial piety). Additionally, such reciprocal filial piety has been shown to promote family happiness.

The study also showed a general decline in the preference for a son, although some people still had this preference, especially among the senior group. In a study of the preference for a son among Vietnamese living both at home and abroad, Mai Van Hai (2017b) also pointed out its limited perseverance. This fact may be more readily corroborated in in-depth interviews when trust between researcher and respondent is established. Nguyen Duy Anh and his colleagues (2023) also confirmed the same results, though the pressure to have a son turned out to be decreasing in pregnant women. Clearly, traditional beliefs need time to change.

Many studies on the shift in family values in Europe point to features that are considered non-traditional, namely, low birth rates, increased abortion rates, unmarried couples living together, single mothers, and childlessness (Jones, 1994; Chaloupková et al., 2014). Our study revealed intergenerational changes in the values held, but the differences within Vietnam are not pronounced. It can be said that both continuity and variability of successive generations axiology are inevitable, reflecting the continuously evolving nature of society. Jones (1994) established two main outlooks on family values in a study of families in the Southern European-Mediterranean region. One was traditional, while the other regarded tradition as part of an outdated institution. Evidence was seen in the increase in divorce, the decline in birth rates, and a greater openness in sexual matters. Here, 'non-traditional' did not entail any 'family crisis' but rather a wish not to over-emphasise old values, using old values as a measure of new values while still accepting the behaviour and demands of modern life. Vietnam, like some other Asian countries, tends to favour collective values, emphasising intergenerational harmony. Accordingly, the differences in held values do not seem extreme: generations can coexist in harmony while holding different values. Contemporary values and generational differences intertwine in today's families. This implies that conclusions regarding the cultural factor behind family values, both in general and in Vietnamese culture in particular, must be drawn in the context of the multidimensional nature of the family structure. In brief, each generation has a right to its views while accepting and respecting the values held by the remaining generations.

CONCLUSION

Our study of family values across three generations revealed discrepancies in how family members model parent-child relationships depending on their age group. The senior generation supported traditional concepts of child-rearing, showed a preference for having a son, and prioritised offspring, both children and grandchildren. For the middle generation of parents, who still act in their capacity of children towards their own parents, it is clear that sacrifice and the duty to take care of children are important values. There are concepts that appear to be more prominent in the youngest generation. They feature appreciating the balance

between work, family and children, less pronounced/lesser desire to have a son, less emphasis on parents' sacrifices for their children, and not wishing to have many children. We hope that our results can lay the foundation for common understanding and acceptance across all generations in the family and foster happiness among its members. These results show that, although there are specific differences in the cultural identity between generations in families, we also see commonality in the development of family values in the respective survey samples.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to offer their thanks for the valuable comments and revisions suggested by Dr Colin Brydon (retired, University of Edinburgh, Scotland). We also express our gratitude to everyone who helped us collect the data.

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