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#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VITALITY AND GENERATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

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#### *Abstract*

The paper studies topical issues of differences between generations. It indicates that most of the research is a comparison of people of different birth years (different ages). The approach based on the sample division on identification with generation will be more justified, when studying differences in the level of vitality between generations. There are the results of the empirical study within the relationship of generational identification type with vitality level. 146 people (66 men and 80 women) aged 17 to 72 years were interviewed during the study. The type of generational identification was determined by asking questions of which generation is closer to a person. Vitality level was studied with the Russian version of "Hardiness Survey" questionnaire. Kruskal-Wallis H-test was used for mathematical data processing. The study results showed that in all age groups (except for people over 60 years of age), congruent generation-based identification prevails. Research participants identify themselves more often with Soviet or post-Soviet generations. Significant differences were found in "control" and "risk acceptance" scales and the overall score on vitality questionnaire between people who identify themselves with different generations. This fact led to the conclusion that vitality level depends on the type of generational identification: the most viable are people who identify themselves with older generations (post-war and Soviet), less viable people who identify themselves with post-Soviet generation. People who consider themselves a transitional generation have the lowest level of vitality. The paper notes future research directions.

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**Keywords:** Generational identification, vitality, post-war generation, Soviet.



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## 1. Introduction

The studies of intergenerational differences enjoy the worldwide popularity. The generation theory by Howe and Strauss (1991) opened up a new perspective to explain social and psychological phenomena and processes. This theory is based on the idea that a person's worldview is shaped under the influence of the social and historical context of the time in which he grew up, it and determines the characteristics of his behavior.

Any theory needs confirmation. However, the phenomenon of generation theory focuses on the fact that even before scientific confirmation many options for its practical implementation appeared (Dam, Noben, & Higgins, 2017). In the scientific world, there is a paradoxical picture. On the one hand, there is a discussion whether there are any differences between generations (Campbell, Campbell, Siedor, & Twenge, 2015; Cucina, Byle, Martin, & Gast, 2018; Rudolph & Zacher, 2017). On the other hand, there are recommendations how to use the resources of each generation in practical activities: in training (Dam et al., 2017), work (Yakimova & Masilova, 2017), marketing (Astashova, 2014). This paradox leads to a broad issue discussion related to the scientific study of generations. There are some urgent problems: definitions of the notion "generation"; criteria determination for representatives of different generations; a methodology to separate the effects of age, time of birth and experience; study of intercultural phenomena of generations. Their solution is necessary to answer the question on differences between different generations and how strong they are.

## 2. Problem Statement

The development of positive psychology led to the fact that researchers are focused on the factors, which contribute to stress resistance. As part of the theory of Salutogenesis by A. Antonovsky, it is noted that a person's ability to withstand stress depends on the relationship between the strength of stressors and personality resources (as cited in Schaberle, Roth, Lothaller, & Endler, 2018; Del-Pino-Casadoa, Espinosa-Medinaa, López-Martíneza, & Orgeta, 2019). Recently, psychologists began to pay attention to vitality as a person's personal resource (Maddi, Khoshaba, Harvey, Fazel, & Resurreccion, 2011; Bue et al., 2018; Postnikova, 2016).

Maddi et al. (2011) believe this particular personality characteristic provides a person with coping with life's difficulties. It represents a person's belief system about the world and oneself, which helps to overcome stressful situations, and perceive them as an opportunity for development, and not a catastrophe (Bue et al., 2018).

Currently, there are very few studies devoted to the vitality analysis of representatives of different generations. Perhaps this is due to the difficulties to organize empirical research, the main of which are the lack of birth date as a criterion to distinguish generations and differences in the cultural context of generations in different countries.

Lyons and Schweitzer (2017) point out that the most of existing researches on differences between generations are based on cross-sectional methodology and they compare people from different birth years. For example, the study by Postnikova (2016) is devoted to compare vitality level in different age groups.

As a result, it is unclear what differences the author studies – age or generational. To solve this problem, scientists strive for a more subtle subjective conceptualization of generations based on social identification.

Twenge (2017) offers a social and constructivist approach to analyze differences between generations. According to this approach, generations are subjective social-mediated categories that explain the complex social mechanisms based on age. In this case, the question of how people perceive different generations and which of them are considered as important.

The problem of self-determination of personality through self-identification to a certain generation is traditionally regarded as a problem of social identity (Sivrikova, 2014; Stone-Johnson, 2018; Lyons, Schweitzer, Urick, & Kuron, 2019). In scientific literature there are only a few studies that are devoted to the problem of generational identification (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Lyons et al., 2019; Sivrikova, 2014), within which a significant heterogeneity in generation identification has been revealed. Therefore, it would be more justified that when studying differences in vitality level between generations, the approach based on dividing the sample on identification with generation rather than based on the person's year of birth. However, to identify oneself with this or that generation, it is important to understand which particular generations are represented in modern society.

From a theoretical point of view, age cohorts are often organized around key historical events. Consequently, in different countries, due to differences in their history, society is divided into different generations. In Western countries, there are six different generations: Veterans; Baby boomers; Generation X; Generation Y or Millennials and Generation Z or Post-Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 1991). In China, generations of the Cultural Revolution, social reforms and the generation of the millennium are being studied (Jun, Chun-Sheng, & Jun, 2018). In Russia, you can meet different points of view on the typology of generations. M.I. Postnikova notes five generations: post-war; generation of the sixties, generation of "stagnation"; generation of "perestroika"; Post-Soviet generation (Postnikova, 2016). In the studies by Pishchik (2018) considers three generations of Russians: Soviet, transitional and post-Soviet.

Sharing the idea that the greatest influence on the citizens of Russia was made by such events as the Second World War and the Disintegration of the USSR, we have to admit that there are four generations in Russian society: post-war generation, Soviet generation, transitional generation, post-Soviet generation. Their birth, formation and development took place under conditions that differed significantly in ideology, economic stability, and general international tension, which inevitably influenced the formation of their resilience. However, until now, researchers have failed to provide convincing data to talk about differences in vitality among representatives of different generations.

### 3. Research Questions

This study is devoted to vitality analysis of people who identify themselves with one of four generations represented in modern Russian society. Previously, researchers analyzed vitality of age factor (Maddi et al., 2011; Postnikova, 2016; Leontyev & Rasskazova, 2006). Maddi et al. (2011) found that vitality level is positively correlated with age. They note that vitality, as a personal characteristic requires development, therefore, for younger people its indicators may be slightly lower. The comparison of vitality level in groups of students and teachers confirm this idea (Shvareva, 2010). On the other hand, in the studies of other Russian psychologists, inverse relationship was established: at the age of 31–35 years (Leontyev

& Rasskazova, 2006; Postnikova, 2016), the indicators of hardiness were higher than in older groups. Kuasheva (2011) argues that vitality dynamics in the process of professionalization is non-linear and reaches maximum values at the second and final stages of service in the internal affairs bodies.

Thus, in science there are data that suggest that vitality of representatives of different generations will be different. However, the empirical evidence of this statement has not been provided. The comparison of different age groups has led researchers to contradictory conclusions and does not enable to speak with confidence about vitality conditionality that belongs to one generation or another. The analysis of vitality dependence on generational identification will supplement the existing data and solve the issue of studying generation vitality.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to relate vitality level and type of generational identification.

#### 5. Research Methods

The Russian-language version of Maddi (Maddi et al., 2011) Hardiness Survey questionnaire adapted by Leontyev and Rasskazova (2006), was used to collect empirical data. The reference to one or another generation was determined based on self-reports of respondents on the similarity of their own values with the values of different generations. The selection was limited to one generation.

The study involved 146 people, 66 men and 80 women who live in Chelyabinsk (Russia). The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 72 years.

For mathematical processing of study results frequency analysis, descriptive statistics and the Kruskal-Wallis H-test were used.

#### 6. Findings

The analysis results of characteristics of generational identification in the sample studied are presented in Table 01. In general, the sample is dominated by identification with the post-Soviet (43%) and Soviet (35%) generations. These data correspond to the results and conclusions by Ivanova and Rumyantseva (2009). The share of Soviet identity in our country is decreasing. The data obtained are consistent with the characteristics of the demographic situation in Russia: the proportion of people making up the transitional generation is the smallest (10%) because the period of the USSR collapse was relatively short and the birth rate in the country dropped sharply at that time.

**Table 01.** Peculiarities of generational identification of study participants

Age	Generation with which a person identifies himself			
	Post-war	Soviet	Transitional	Post-soviet
Over 60 years (n=36)	41%	56%	0%	3%
46–60 years (n=36)	10%	80%	10%	0%
33–35 years	0%	18%	55%	27%

(n=37)				
17–32 years (n=37)	1.5%	1.5%	8%	89%
Total	12%	35%	10%	43%

Analyzing the relationship between the age of respondents and their generational identification, it can be noted that in all age groups, except for people aged over 60, congruent identification is more often represented (age coincides with the type of generational identification) than incongruent (age does not coincide with the type of generational identification).

Older people (over 60 years old) more often identify themselves with Soviet generation (56%) than with post-war generation (41%). People of these two generations have practically the same ideas on the values, as foreign researchers believe (Parry & Urwin, 2017). The assumption of four or five generational categories is not productive enough for empirical studies. In any case, this question requires clarification and additional research into perception peculiarities of the values of different generations.

The data analysis showed that in all the compared groups the level of conviction that involvement in the events gives the maximum chance to find something worthwhile and interesting for the individual (the “engagement” scale) was below the average statistical norm (Table 02). In general, research participants feel themselves rejected. The similar results were obtained in the study by Postnikova (2016), which explains the low levels of involvement all generations of Russians with crises that almost all citizens of our country are experiencing today.

During the study, there were no significant differences in the level of involvement in groups with different types of generational identification (Table 02).

**Table 02.** Differences in vitality level in different types of generational identification

Indicators		Involvement	Control	Risk taking	Vitality
	Median value				
Generation with which respondents identify themselves	Post-war	25	29.5	21	78
	Soviet	23	29	21	73
	Transitional	21	23	18	62
	Post-soviet	22	25	17,5	67
Statistical criteria					
Empirical value of h-test		3,9	10.7	19.4	9.1
Level of differences significance		0.268	0.014	0.0001	0.028

According to the data obtained, the values on the “control” scale in the studied sample correspond to the average statistical norm (Table 02). This suggests that research participants feel responsible for the events that occur to them.

The study found significant differences in the control level in people who identify themselves with different generations ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The highest level of control is in the group of people who identify themselves with post-war generation. Almost the same level is in those who identify themselves with Soviet generation. The lowest level of control is in the transition generation.

The low level of control among people who identify themselves with the transitional generation can be explained by the fact that the period of extreme instability in society, which preceded the collapse of the

USSR and immediately followed, had a significant impact on the formation of their personalities. The shock of the time gave the whole generation a sense of their own helplessness in the face of circumstances.

The study results suggest that people who identify themselves with older generations are ready to act in situations of uncertainty, without reliable guarantees of success (high values on the “risk acceptance” scale), which significantly distinguishes them from the younger generations ( $p \leq 0.0001$ ). The data obtained by us differ from the data by Postnikova (2016). Probably, discrepancy between the results is due to the difference in approaches to the organization of the study. Postnikova (2016) uses the birth year of respondents as a criterion for generation differentiation, and this study compares groups identified based on generational identification of people.

People who identify themselves with the transitional generation have the average value of vitality level, which is below the average statistical norm. In all other groups, the average values of the parameter under the study were within the standard test values. The differences in vitality level in different types of generational identification are significant at  $p \leq 0.05$  (Table 02). According to Maddi et al. (2011), the effects of natural development can explain higher vitality indicators in people who identify themselves with older generations.

In this study, it was found that the least vitality as a personality resource is in people who identify themselves with the transitional generation. In this case, social and historical factors intervened in the processes of natural development. The catastrophic events associated with the collapse of the USSR had a negative impact on the formation of a whole generation of Russians, leading to a decrease in vitality level of people who identify themselves with the generation of adjustment.

## 7. Conclusion

The research results suggest that vitality level of Russians depends on the type of generational identification. This is manifested in significant differences of people with different types of generational identification on the scales of “control”, “risk acceptance” and in the general level of vitality.

The differences found in the study indicate that people who identify themselves with older generations (post-war and Soviet) are the most viable, people who identify themselves with the post-Soviet generation are less viable. The lowest level of vitality is in people who consider themselves the transitional generation.

The prospects to continue the described study lie in the field of a more detailed analysis of peculiarities of generational identification and their relationship with vitality of generations. In particular, it is important to analyze people's perception of the values of different generations. The analysis of personality characteristics of people with different status of generational identity (congruent and non-congruent), which requires a significant increase in the sample size.

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