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**FEATURES OF PERCEPTION OF INTER-GENERATIONAL
RELATIONSHIPS**

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Abstract

The paper deals with the problem of inter-generational relationships in terms of subjective perception. The study is of current relevance due to intensive development of generational stereotypes and expectations towards representatives of different generations. Focus on generations in society makes membership in one of them meaningful and valuable to the individual. Belonging to a generation, and to any other social group can produce perception asymmetry effects. In foreign science, the problem of generational stereotypes is considered at theoretical, methodological and empirical levels. In Russia, scientists have studied inter-generational differences so far. However, international experience shows that differences in perceptions of generations significantly exceed the values of actual differences between them. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate the characteristics of perception of relationship between generations. The study involved 200 people (88 men and 112 women). The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 72 years. Six scales with a rating system from -3 to 3 points were used to assess relationship between the respondents and representatives of different generations (military, post-war, Soviet, transitional and post-Soviet). Two scales covered negative aspects of the relationship (conflict and misunderstanding) and four scales referred to positive aspects. Based on factor analysis, a model was developed that included 6 factors and described 64.28% of variance. The comparison of the distinction of the factors obtained in groups of different gender and age revealed that perception of relationship with representatives of military/post-war, Soviet and post-Soviet generations depends on the age of the subject of evaluation.

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Keywords: Inter-generational relationships, post-war generation, transitional, stereotypes.



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1. Introduction

The relevance of the study of inter-generational relationship is explained by an increased age diversity of the workforce (King, Finkelstein, & Ryan, 2012; Perry, Hanvongse, & Casoinic, 2013), the tendency to increased retirement age (Fisher, Truxillo, Finkelstein, & Wallace, 2017), cohabitation of representatives of different generations (Easthope, Liu, Burnley, & Judd, 2017), multi-generational nature of modern society (Maximova, Noyanzina, & Maximova, 2017). Researchers note that the changed demographic situation changes interpersonal relationships between different age groups (King et al., 2012). An important factor in this relationship is interpersonal perception, including the opinion of people about members of other generational groups and interactions with them.

Foreign researchers believe that perceptions and expectations for different generations are likely to develop in society due to increased attention to generations and widespread public discourse about generational differences in general and in the workplace in particular (Perry et al., 2017). In addition, closer attention to generations and inter-generational differences today is supposed to make membership in each generation valuable and meaningful. These processes can possibly contribute to formation of stereotypes of generations in society that affect inter-generational relationships.

2. Problem Statement

It should be noted that the features of perception of generations is a poorly studied area. So far, age-related stereotypes have been in the focus of researchers. The contents of age and generational stereotypes somewhat coincide, however they can also differ significantly, since age and generational identity are not always identic (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Perry et al., 2017; Sivrikova, 2014). In addition, there are differences between age and generational groups. For example, belonging to a generation is permanent, and belonging to an age group is temporary; the type of generation is associated with the national-historical context (different generations are distinguished in different countries), and age groups do not depend on nationality or historical events (they coincide in different countries).

Modern studies of age stereotypes exhibit originality of approaches and research methods. Researchers analyze the content of age-related stereotypes in the media (Oró-Piqueras & Marques, 2017; Bae, Jo, Han, & Lee, 2018), popular proverbs (Maximov & Starchikova, 2011) and online humor (Nimrod & Berdychevsky, 2018), the impact of the interaction experience (Bocksnick & Dyck, 2018) and special programs (Lou & Dai, 2017) on perception of older people, the impact of age on assessment of victims and perpetrators of crimes (Chu & Grün, 2018), the dependence of the content of age stereotypes on the concept of a mobile phone (Comunello, Ardevol, Mulargia, & Belotti, 2017), the impact of culture on age stereotypes (Schloegel, Stegmann, Van Dick, & Maedche, 2018). Research findings highlight a number of paradoxes associated with age-related stereotypes: the paradox of reinforced real negative age stereotypes (Spangenberg, Zenger, Glaesmer, Brähler, & Strauss, 2018; Levy, 2017) despite positive representation of older people in the media (Oró-Piqueras & Marques, 2017; Bae et al., 2018); the paradox of ambivalence of age stereotypes (higher grade of friendliness against low marks for competence in the elderly, and an opposite pattern for the young) (Vauclair et al., 2017). The effects of age-related stereotypes are being studied: internalization and dissociation (Nimrod & Berdychevsky, 2018; Weiss & Kornadt, 2018).

Despite a dramatically small number of studies of generational stereotypes, there are empirical data that confirm the differences between perceptions of age and generational groups. Moreover, researchers argue that the perception of the Baby Boomer generation is more positive than the perception of the corresponding age group (Perry et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to study generational stereotypes.

Separate studies have provided indirect data on how different generations are perceived in society (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008; Jovic, Wallace, & Lemaire, 2006). However, due to the fact that the subject of these studies was not the differences in perception of generations themselves, the conclusions on this issue are restrained conceptually and methodologically (Perry et al., 2017).

The study of generational identification has shown that people identify themselves with a certain generation and stereotype ideas about other generational groups (Roberto & Biggan, 2014). The analysis of the values of generations and people's ideas about what is significant for different generations revealed that the differences in perceptions of generations significantly exceed the values of the actual differences between them (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012). The study of the content of stereotypes of different generations in people's ideas and in practical literature made it possible to find out that Baby Boomers are perceived as hardworking and poorly competent in modern technologies, and Millennials and representatives of Generation Y are disobedient, but confident in their technology (Lester et al., 2012; Perry et al., 2013; Roberto & Biggan, 2014; Lyons, Urick, Kuron, & Schweitzer, 2015).

Researchers conclude that stereotypes of generations have a systematic impact on human activity, and they play a key role in perception of different generational groups and generational identification (Lyons et al., 2015). They can interfere with communication, trust, knowledge sharing and coordination in joint activities (Schloegel et al., 2018). They depend on inter-generational contacts, legislation and social climate (Levy, 2017).

3. Research Questions

It should be noted that in Russia interest in the features of perception of different generations has not developed in the form of empirical research, but the problem of inter-generational relationships is being widely discussed (Gorbachev, 2015; Agafonov, 2017; Rykiel & Tychinina, 2017). Therefore, we turned to the analysis of differences in perception of different generations of modern Russia.

Based on the concept of inter-generational relationships M.I. Postnikova (2011), 5 generations were studied: military, postwar, Soviet, transitional and post-Soviet. This classification was based on the most significant events in the history of Russia: the Second World War and the collapse of the USSR.

A broad discussion of the problem of inter-generational interaction in the media and in scientific literature allowed us to assume that people would assess their relationships with representatives of different generations in different ways.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to investigate the features of perception of inter-generational relationships.

5. Research Methods

The study involved 200 individuals. Of these, 88 are men and 112 are women. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 72 years. The ratio of respondents of different age and gender in the studied sample is presented in Table 01.

Table 01. Age and gender characteristics of the sample studied

Age	Gender (number of individuals)	
	Male	Female
Over 60 years (n = 50)	25	25
46-60 years (n = 50)	24	26
33-35 years (n = 50)	25	25
17-32 years (n = 50)	22	28
Total	88	112

The study involved employees of enterprises and organizations in Chelyabinsk and Arkhangelsk (Russia), as well as students of state universities located in these cities.

To assess interaction between representatives of different generations, respondents were offered 6 semantic scales (comfort/discomfort; closeness/distance; conflict/conflict-free; respect/disrespect; misunderstanding/understanding; calm/tension). The scales ranged from 3 to -3 points. For each of the scales, respondents evaluated their relations with representatives of different generations of military, post-war, Soviet, transitional and post-Soviet periods.

6. Findings

To determine the features of perceptions of inter-generational relations, we conducted factor analysis of the perception of relationships of respondents with each of the 5 generations: military, post-war, Soviet, transitional and post-Soviet.

The analysis of the suitability of empirical data for factor analysis showed an acceptable adequacy of the sample for a given mathematical procedure (Kaiser-Meier-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.84; the accuracy of the result according to the Bartlett's test of sphericity was $p \leq 0.0001$). The factor analysis performed by the principal component method using varimax rotation yielded a model that includes 6 factors causing 64.28% of variance, which indicates a satisfactory factor solution. Table 02 presents the matrix of the components showing the composition of the factors obtained.

According to the obtained results, the first factor (26.41% of variance) combined all negative attitudes to different generations. It includes the values of conflict/conflict-free and misunderstanding/understanding, which characterize the relationship with all the generations studied. It can be assumed that the negative attitude towards representatives of other generations in the studied sample is poorly differentiated and rather reflects the general background of the relationships between generations. A high degree of interconnection of the assessment of relationships with different generations may indicate that negative aspects of relationships do not concern a particular generation.

The second and third factors involved the assessment of military and post-war generations on the scales of comfort and closeness (factor 2), respect and calm (factor 3). These 2 factors represent 24.07% of variance.

Table 02. Factor structure of the assessment of inter-generational relationships

Generation	Scales	Factors					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Military	Comfort		0.772				
	Closeness		0.792				
	Respect			0.651			
	Calm			0.659			
	Conflict	0.708					
	Misunderstanding	0.676					
Post-war	Comfort		0.588				
	Closeness		0.613				
	Respect			0.72			
	Calm			0.714			
	Conflict	0.807					
	Misunderstanding	0.755					
Soviet	Comfort						0.631
	Closeness						0.688
	Respect						0.675
	Calm						0.678
	Conflict	0.752					
	Misunderstanding	0.674					
Transient	Comfort				0.762		
	Closeness				0.764		
	Respect				0.669		
	Calm				0.693		
	Conflict	0.578					
Post-soviet	Comfort					0.827	
	Closeness					0.808	
	Respect					0.593	
	Calm					0.726	
	Conflict	0.535					
Total variance explained							
Variance %		26.41%	13.13%	10.94%	5.124%	4.5%	4.2%

Since the assessments of military and post-war generations were very similar (included in one factor), it can be concluded that the Russians poorly differentiate relationships with representatives of these two generations.

The fourth factor combined the assessment of transitional generation on the scales of comfort, closeness, respect and calm. The fifth factor represented a similar pattern for post-Soviet generation, and the sixth factor showed the assessment of Soviet generation.

Thus, the first factor indicates negative perception of inter-generational relationships, the second and third factors show positive perception of relationships with military and post-war generations, the fourth factor presents positive perception of relationships with transitional generation, the fifth factor shows positive perception of relationships with post-Soviet generation, and the sixth factor shows positive perception of relationships with Soviet generation.

Differences in these factors were studied in people of different ages and gender. Significant differences in the perception of men and women could not be observed.

Differences in the perception of people of different ages by factors # 3, # 5, and # 6 turned out to be reliable (Table 03). The results of the study indicate that positive perception of relationships with representatives of military/post-war generations ($p \leq 0.05$) and with Soviet generation ($p \leq 0.001$) increases from younger respondents to older ones. But the degree of positivity in the perception of relationships with post-Soviet generation exhibits a reverse trend: it decreases with age.

Table 03. Age and gender characteristics of the sample

Intergenerational factors	Group average				Standard statistics of jonckheere-terpstra test	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
	17-32 years	33-35 years	46-60 years	Over 60 years		
Conflict and misunderstanding between generations	0.11	0.20	-0.05	-0.04	-1.69	0.09
Comfort and closeness in the perception of military and post-war generations	-0.12	0.17	0.28	0.14	1.45	0.15
Respect and calm in the perception of military and post-war generations	-0.14	-0.26	0.27	0.15	2.20	0.03
Positive perception of relationships with transitional generation	-0.05	0.00	0.07	-0.31	-0.61	0.54
Positive perception of relationships with post-soviet generation	0.35	-0.07	-0.40	-0.35	-3.86	0.0001
Positive perception of relationships with soviet generation	-0.21	0.05	0.24	0.29	2.66	0.01

In general, the results of the study indicate that the closer the generation is to the age group of respondents, the more positive is the relationship with this generation. Relationships are most positively

perceived if the age of respondents is similar to that of the generation representatives. Similar trends confirm the theory of self-classification, according to which an individual learns about other people by classifying them into groups and comparing these groups. At the same time, the perception of groups are asymmetric: own group is perceived positively, and others groups are perceived negatively (Hogg & Rinella, 2019).

7. Conclusion

The study allowed the following conclusions:

Assessment of negative aspects of inter-generational relationships (conflict and misunderstanding) is a single factor, which indicates weak differentiation of interaction with representatives of these generations.

Relationships with military and post-war generations in the studied sample are evaluated in a similar way and depend on the age of the subject assessed.

The closer a person's age to military/post-war, Soviet or post-Soviet generations, the more positively he assesses the relationship with them. Relationships with representatives of the generation corresponding to the age of the subject are perceived as positively as possible.

The results of the study are important for further understanding of inter-generational relationships, as well as for developing impact programs aimed at improving people's interaction at work and in the family. A promising area for further research on perceptions of inter-generational relationships may be an analysis of their relationship with the frequency of contacts with different generation, and their dependence on generational identification.

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