

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Abstract. *Throughout life receiving and offering emotional support is an important dimension in the relations between parents and children. Receiving emotional support from adult children is especially important for the aging parents, as it is – according to domestic and foreign research on family support systems – related to greater affective wellbeing, the feeling of satisfaction with life and the health of the parents. In this paper we are interested in the emotional support provided through intergenerational ties in Slovenia. We have observed the share of family intergenerational ties (within all ties that offer emotional support) and the demographic variables that influence the extent to which the family members rely on intergenerational family ties for their emotional support. Our data shows that the share of family intergenerational ties is significantly influenced by age, gender, marital status and the composition of the household. The feeling of the importance of ties is not linked to the share of intergenerational ties in an emotional network, and individuals who are likely to irritate the respondents are less likely to be a part of an emotional network.*

Keywords: *emotional support, intergenerational solidarity, gender, age*

Introduction

At least three things are characteristic for intergenerational family relations in contemporary Western societies: they last longer than in any other historical period, they are predominantly emotionally based and they are growing in importance. Firstly, the fact that the relations between children and their parents last for a longer time i.e. that a larger number of people live with their family for a longer period is linked to population aging. The

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fall in nativity and the ever longer life spans are changing the structure of society – in literature this is marked by the metaphor generational beanpole – which includes a number of (adult) generations, each of which consists of a small number of individuals. The changes that move in the direction of forming three or more multi-generational families create opportunities for more direct interpersonal relations between the members of the various generations and less peer contacts within the family (Williams and Nussbaum, 2001: 34). Secondly, research (e.g. Lawton et al., 1994; Bengston, 2001) shows that despite the changes in the social structure¹ (which some estimate weaken the contacts and solidarity between the younger and older generation), vertical family relations are preserved as an important source of social support that never tends to disappear completely: parents and their (adult) children help each other throughout their entire lives, even when they live in separate households. Adult children and their parents do not break their emotional ties and do not stop providing emotional support.

In comparison to the early 20th century, when the relations between parents and children were typically not emotionally coloured (Jamieson and Tonybee, 1990), these relations are today filled with personal affection, emotional expression and communication. Love and care that the mothers have shown for their children (in accordance to the social expectations of the society at the time) through family work, was substituted by a new form of intimacy that ‘now encompasses constantly working with the child, to know and understand him or her’ (Jamieson, 1998: 47). We are talking about custodial care for the child’s physical and emotional well-being. Family relations have become less structurally defined and more personally coloured. The care for emotional well-being (through the offer of emotional support) is moving in the direction of reciprocity, exchange and co-dependency. The new reciprocity ethos amongst family members means that both, parents and adult children, tend to lean towards the development of a mutual understanding ‘through talking and listening, sharing thoughts, showing feelings’ (Jamieson, 1998: 158). Jamieson talked about ‘disclosing intimacy’, which is based on verbal communication, deep knowledge and understanding, as well as trust, i.e. ‘faith that confidences will not be betrayed and privileged knowledge will not be used against the self’ (ibid: 9). Giddens also ascertained that intimacy in late modernity was constructed as a field in which emotion as ‘communication, commitment and cooperation with others is especially important’ (1992: 202) and where ‘sensitivity and understanding are asked on both sides’ (1992: 98). The relation parents – children is structured around the dialogue. Thirdly, the increasing importance

¹ For instance mobility of the inhabitants, employment of women, individualisation, an increase in the number of divorces, etc.

of intergenerational relations within the family is explained by at least two factors: the instability of marital and other intimate partner relations (intergenerational family relations substitute or compensate for the weakening or loss of emotional ties that these relations used to ensure for the adult children, see e.g. Toguchi Swartz, 2009) and the greater occurrence of chronic diseases amongst the elderly. The latter intensifies the meaning of intergenerational relations and care for parents in their third and fourth life periods (Bradley and Cafferty, 2001). Intergenerational exchanges are not merely important on the personal level but also represent an important social issue; as a result of the diminishing social and welfare programmes refamilisation is taking place, and this gives the family the central role in providing for the needs of its members, especially the elderly.

In the research of intergenerational relations and solidarity the emotional dimensions of reciprocal relations and intimacies (exposed in the contemporary theoretical discussions on the intimacy transformation) are included in the concept of emotional solidarity. The concept is linked to the positive emotions between family members, including affection, emotional closeness, trust, and respect (Bengtson et al., 2002; Bengtson and Roberts 1991 in Birditt et al., 2009: 288), or to a type and level of reciprocity of these emotions.² Emotional solidarity represents one of the six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity (a model that explains the relations between parents and children in the later phases of life) and alongside material aid one of the main aspects of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). The concept of solidarity includes interactions within the family, that through the exchange of emotions, viewpoints and knowledge connect the members from various generations (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). Critics see a potential danger of idealisation in the solidarity model that exposes the consensual aspects of the family and family cohesion, thus various authors have adapted their model in such a way that it includes – as a normal compound of family relations – the conflict dimension (Parrott and Bengtson 1999 in Lowenstein, 2007: 101). However, this new solidarity–conflict paradigm has received a critical response from theoreticians. As they were of the opinion that the dynamics of intergenerational relations in the family do not revolve around solidarity, affection and assistance, or around the conflict, but around the contradictions and their management in the day-to-day family life, they proposed a different conceptualisation of family relations. The intergenerational ambivalence model states that adult

² When measuring the positive feelings linked to interpersonal relations researchers often use the Bengtson's index of emotional solidarity, in which the participants are asked how much they trust and respect each other, what sort of affection do they feel, how honest they think the others are (Birditt et al., 2009: 290).

intergenerational relations revolve around sociological and psychological contradictions (Lowenstein, 2007).

Intergenerational solidarity in the family is – when balancing the received and provided support – important for ensuring psychological well-being (Ingersoll-Dayton and Antonucci 1988 in Lowenstein et al., 2007: 866). The feeling of content and the parents' health are importantly linked to emotional solidarity, the feeling that they are emotionally close to their adult children (for an overview of the various researches see Lowenstein et al., 2007: 877). Bengtson and Robert's model (1991) of intergenerational solidarity distinguishes six elements of intergenerational solidarity. Apart from affection solidarity, which encompasses a degree of positive sentiments towards family members as well as a degree of reciprocity of these sentiments, emotional exchanges are seen as a part of functional solidarity (frequency of intergenerational exchanges of assistance (e.g. financial, physical, emotional) and reciprocity in the intergenerational exchange of resources).

Our study focused on two points: firstly, on the share of intergenerational ties in the emotional social support network (assessed with the following network generator: Sometimes people discuss important personal matters with other people, for instance when they have an argument with somebody, have problems at work or similar. With whom do you usually discuss personal matters of importance?) and secondly, on the affective component of intergenerational ties that provide emotional social support (assessed through the following name interpreters: How important is this person in your life? How often does this person put you in bad mood?). Although we do not address affection solidarity as defined by Bengtson and Roberts (1991), we consider two components of interpersonal relationships (closeness and degree of negative affect). The connection between quality of tie and occurrence of intergenerational ties in provision of emotional support has not yet been researched in Slovenia. We assume that having the feeling of importance will enhance intergenerational exchange of emotional support and, on the other hand existence of ambivalent feelings will reduce the share of intergenerational exchange

Research shows that the role of the emotional support offered by family members is of key importance for the well-being of individuals (Sherman et al., 2000; Vandervoort, 2000) and is as such linked to successful aging and the so-called positive affective profile³ (Isaacowitz and Seligman, 2003). Emotional support functions as a shield that protects the aged from the negative physical and psychological problems (Reinhardt and Blieszer, 2000; Rook, 1987; Thompson and Heller, 1990).

³ *Positive affective profile is a concept that describes the minimal presence of depressive symptoms and negative affects and a high level of positive affects and content with life.*

Previous research of emotional solidarity

Intergenerational exchange of social support and solidarity is present and important throughout the various life phases. The overview of the research (see Lang and Schutze, 2002: 662) indicates that the relations between the generations within the close family are marked by strong emotional closeness and affection, value consensus, frequent contacts, and support exchanges. In literature the importance of intergenerational support ties within the family and the vast support exchanged by the parents and adult children in Northern America and Western Europe is described as the 'hidden connection in western society' (Williams and Nussbaum, 2001: 35).⁴

Emotional support takes place in both directions, from the children to the parents and vice versa. As regards quantity it is often balanced or the children offer their parents (similar to instrumental support, e.g. household chores) more support than they receive from them (while financial support is more likely to pass from the old to the young) (Schwarz and Trommsdorff, 2005: 192). The research that included parents over 75 years old and their children (carried out in 5 states)⁵ (Lowenstein et al., 2007) showed a high level of reciprocity in emotional support in comparison to other dimensions of intergenerational solidarity: both generations provided and received a relatively high level of emotional support. Amongst all solidarity dimensions the emotional solidarity component was the single most important predictor of life satisfaction. Even more, affection solidarity is the highest type of support exchanged between the generations in all countries (Lowenstein et al., 2007: 877).

Gender plays an important role in the intergenerational ties within the family. Research shows that women play a central role in family solidarity (see Williams and Nussbaum, 2001: 32). Already classical studies of family ties (encompassing the working as well as middle class) have shown that mothers and daughters are closer than any other combination of intergenerational family couples (see Pfeifer and Sussman, 1991: 240). Rossi and Rossi (1990) ascertained that gender influences the level of affective closeness between parents and children and that the relation between mother and daughter represents the strongest bond of all parent-child gender dyads

⁴ *Strong emotional solidarity includes greater emotional proximity between the children and parents (when compared to other relatives), even when adult children no longer live with their parents (Szydlik, 2008: 104). Strong emotional ties and contact frequency between family members do not in themselves ensure a positive experience; on the contrary, they can include conflicting relations or relations that express ambivalence. Some authors thus speak about 'hidden disconnections' (Williams and Nussbaum, 2001: 29, 35-36).*

⁵ *In this study a random child (and not the focal child i.e., the child who helps or interacts with the parents the most) was selected as the target child. The randomly selected targeted child was the one whose birthday was the closest to the interview date. The respondents were asked: How close do you feel to (this child)?*

(mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son). Aging mothers are more likely to chose their daughters as confidantes (rather than their sons), mothers receive greater emotional support from their adult children than fathers and parents with a single daughter are more likely to receive her emotional support (and other forms of support) than those parents who only have sons (Falk and Falk, 2005: 73-74). In contemporary Western societies fathers do not receive as much intergenerational support from the family and have less contacts with adult children; the less favourable position of the fathers is increased in the event of widowhood or divorce (Kalmijn 2007 in Korinek et al., 2009).

Research in Slovenia also indicates the presence of intergenerational sources of emotional support. In most cases the elderly receive emotional support from their partners or their adult children (Kogovšek et al., 2003). Research (Šadl and Hlebec, 2007, 2009) also shows that the bond between the parents and adult children is an important source of emotional support. Parents have stated that in the event of emotional problems the response of the adult children and their families is mainly good, that they are understanding and that they offer various types of emotional support (from messages 'we are here ' or 'we are at your disposal ', through encouraging words to activities, with the aid of which they transfer the attention from the problems to other themes). Research (Šadl and Hlebec, 2007) also confirmed the ascertainment of the foreign studies that women have more cohesive intergenerational family relations than men: women most commonly turn to their mothers or daughters for emotional support ('I mainly depend on my daughter', 'when I am emotionally drained or when I have problems I certainly (turn to - note by author) my daughter', 'I download all my woes on my mother'). Women do not turn to fathers or sons for emotional support ('my daughter is better at comforting me than my son'). The female interviewees described the male members of the family network as emotionally insensitive, inapproachable and incommunicative. On the other hand it was observed that adult daughters also offer support to their fathers, even though they do not turn to their daughters (when faced with emotional problems) in an open, explicit way ('I find it easier to help my mother than my father, for he is much more reserved').⁶

⁶ In our research we observed 2 men and 14 women in the parent group and 3 men and 13 women in the grandparent group. At the above stated it should therefore be taken into account that our sample mainly consisted of women who revealed their view on emotional support. In the future it would be necessary to also include the 'male' support response to the problems of others. The biased standards with which we look for merely 'female' ways of showing support, place women into a seemingly leading role, and the male into an unduly lower position in the exchange of support (intra and intergenerational). Rossi (1995) has ascertained that it is impossible to appropriately analyse the gender in the study of intergenerational relations without observing the gender on both sides of the parent-child dyad.

Alongside gender, age is also an important factor in intergenerational relations and emotional solidarity (Giarmusso et al., 1995). As the parents age the need for a multitude of various supports can prompt more common contacts between parents and children and increase the emotional support provided by the children. According to the socio-emotional selection theory (in Krause and Shaw, 2000: 326) the importance of emotional support increases with age; older adults are more likely to exchange emotional than instrumental support with their family members (Kulis 1992 in Krause and Shaw, 2000: 326). The role of adult children and grandchildren increases as they fulfil the emotional needs of the older generations within the family. Aged parents want to preserve intimate contacts with their adult children, exchange emotional support and live in their vicinity in case they will be need their help (Pfeifer and Sussman, 1991: 129).

In Slovenia adult children represent an important source of emotional support for the elderly parents (Kogovšek et al., 2003). Research (Šadl, 2005) has shown that most of the emotional support in the oldest age category (65–75 years) of parents is provided by their children. While the data for 1987 showed that emotional support was more dispersed (partner, friends, co-workers, neighbours, co-members of organisations), in 2002 the various providers of support lost on importance, and the role of children as the providers of emotional support was greatly increased (from 6 % in 1987 to 18 % in 2002).

The cohabitation of parents and adult children can create strong family ties and a high level of satisfaction with family relations (Zunzunegui et al., 2001). However, cohabitation in multigenerational households does not have merely positive aspects. Research shows that living in a shared household brings a supportive social environment, interaction and positive emotional consequences on one hand and negative influences on the psychological well-being as well as a feeling of loneliness (for parents) on the other hand (Lowenstein, 2007).

Research shows that the marital status of both generations is an important indicator of emotional solidarity between adult children and their parents. For instance Walker et al. (1987) ascertained less attachment amongst married, young daughters and their mothers in comparison to single young daughters and their mothers. On the other hand adult children play an important role at reducing the depression that appears when one of the parents is widowed (Li et al., 2005). While adult children are the first source of support for their widowed parents, the divorce of the parents has deleterious effects on the intergenerational relations in the family (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 1998). This holds true especially in the event of divorced fathers who received the least informal help from their adult children (Knijn and Kompter, 2004: 142; Silverstein and Bengtson, 1997: 451–452). Divorced

parents have fewer contacts with adult children than their married or widowed counterparts (Barrett and Lynch, 1999; Grundy and Shelton, 2001; Lye et al., 1995). Richards et al. (1989) have ascertained that the divorce of the parents is more destructive for the intergenerational relations in the family than the divorce of the children. As we have already mentioned, intergenerational relations within the family represent a substitute for the loss of emotional ties when adult children separate from their partners (Toguchi Swartz, 2009).

The model of intergenerational solidarity assumes that the provision of support is influenced by the quality of the attachment relations between parents and children. In literature the quality of attachment relationships is defined as a 'specific organization of a relationship, the way in which attachment behaviour and care giving behaviour hang together as a more or less stable and effective pattern of interaction around the goal of felt security' (Ainsworth 1973 in Merz, 2008: 25). Research shows the positive relation between the emotional qualities of a relationship (feeling of closeness, warmth, positive evaluation of the other) and the social support exchange (see Schwarz and Trommsdorff, 2005: 192). Some research shows that the intergenerational solidarity and support that adult children offer their parents depends on their early experience in the parent - child relationship (see Schwarz and Trommsdorff, 2005: 192).⁷ Regardless of the high level of emotional solidarity revealed by the research, intergenerational relations are also marked by conflicts and detachment that can endanger intergenerational exchange of support. The frequency of contacts between family members and the strong emotional ties do not guaranty a positive experience. The coexisting presence of polarized simultaneous emotions, thoughts and volitions within the same relation is a part of the everyday life and research shows (see Luscher, 2005: 108-109) that an ambivalent experience is common and widespread in intergenerational family relations. »Qualitatively suboptimal is the state in which closeness and distance are in a contradiction that cannot be reconciled, a state which in intergenerational solidarity research has been described as ambivalence« (Lüscher and Pillemer 1998 in Merz et al., 2007: 180).

⁷ *Adult children with a history of insecure attachment relationships can encounter problems when taking care of their parents. This occurs due to the subconscious operation of mental representations (or so-called insecure internal working models of themselves or other internal working models) that they have experienced in their repetitive interactions with their carers and which include information on events and emotions linked to these events (feeling of rejection from the parents). However, stressful childhood situations do not mean that adult children necessarily have problems or inhibitions when offering support in the later relations with their parents. Regardless of their early emotional distance the support between them and their parents increases with time and age (Silverstein et al., 2002 in Merz et al., 2007: 177), at which the care for parents is sometimes also directed by filial obligation and society norms (Silverstein et al. 2002 in Merz, 2008: 27).*

Research questions and hypotheses

This article sets two main objectives: we wish to obtain an insight into the quantity e.g. share of intergenerational ties amongst all those ties that offer emotional support (the other relations or sources are friends, intra-generational family relations – partner and extended family) and the dispersion of intergenerational relations across the population. We are interested in which population groups have a greater or lower share of intergenerational emotional support and how can we understand the influence of the socio-demographic characteristics of parents and adult children upon this dispersion. Therefore, the main research question is: which demographic variables influence the extent to which family members rely for emotional support on intergenerational family relations.

It seems sensible and important to analyse the share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support by gender. On the basis of the theory of socio-emotional selection (Carstensen 1992; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, Charles 1999; Krause in Shaw, 2000) and the research on social (emotional) support in Slovenia (for example, Kogovšek et al., 2003; Šadl, 2005; Šadl and Hlebec, 2007, 2009) and elsewhere (for example, see Lowenstein et al., 2007) we can assume that the share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support will be significant and that we should expect different patterns of intergenerational ties between men and women. We should also expect that the share of intergenerational family ties will show great differences in the provision of emotional support according to gender. As we took into account the fact that emotional support typically unfolds in the context of close relations and that traditionally it is the women who hold the role of 'kin keepers' within the family, we can expect differences between the genders in the share of intergenerational ties and the provision of emotional support. Or, to put it in other words, the ascertainment that women have more contacts with children and closer relatives (Ajrouch et al., 2005: 311) and that men are more likely to establish more non-family ties than women (Iglič, 1988: 87) lead us to expect that women will have a greater share of intergenerational emotional ties within the close family.

We further assume – on the basis of Slovene and foreign research – that the share of intergenerational emotional network increases with age: the older an individual, the more he relies on intergenerational emotional support from his close family.

As regards household composition we assume that individuals who live in a multigenerational household have a greater share of intergenerational emotional ties. As we have already mentioned these 'spaces' create opportunities for interpersonal contacts and relations between the younger and older generations. People living on their own are expected to have a higher

share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support. Most often people who live alone are either young people without a partner (who therefore still rely on their parents for the various types of support), or older people, most often widowed (who turn to their children for support after they have lost their most important provider of emotional support – their partner). In separated single parent families, we assume – in accordance to the findings in certain foreign research (Toguchi Swartz, 2009) – that the parents (i.e. adult children) without a partner turn to their (ageing) parents for emotional support.

Taking into account the foreign research findings as regards the influence of the marital status on intergenerational relations, we will include this factor in our analysis. The categories in which we expect to find a greater share of emotional connections with children or parents are single, divorced and widowed, i.e. unmarried individuals or individuals without a partner.

In this article we will also try to establish whether intergenerational relations are connected to the quality of the tie, as this connection has not yet been researched in Slovenia. In order to obtain information as regards the quality of the relationship (respondents have answered the question as regards the negative and positive emotions towards the partner in the relation) we have taken into account the negative as well as positive aspects of intergenerational relations. We assume that having the feeling of belonging (in the sense that the other person is important for the individual) is important for intergenerational exchange of emotional support. Thus we expect that in the event of less harmonious relations or the presence of antipathy (that can be marked even by repulsiveness towards the other person) the share of intergenerational exchange will be reduced. The first question assessed the general feeling towards the support provider (how important is she/he for the respondent). The second question assessed the frequency of putting the respondent in a bad mood – we assume that this is one of the possible indicators of ambivalence (if not conflict) in the relationship between the respondent and the emotional support provider. Parrot and Bengtson (1999) researched how the history of the relationship and concrete exchanges between parents and adult children influence the quantity and reciprocity of social support exchange at present. The negative aspects of the relationships between the parents and adult children were included amongst the important factors. Authors distinguished between various types of social support – three types of social support were included in the research: instrumental support (household chores, transport and shopping, looking after children, helping when ill), emotional support (exchanging information and advice, discussing important matters, joint spending of spare time) and financial support (exchange of money and organising financial matters). The history of emotional attachment between parents

and adult children had a double effect. If there was no history of emotional links, the adult children provided more support to their parents than they received from them. If the relationship included a strong emotional attachment in the past, the exchanges of support were more reciprocal or beneficiary for the children. Even though authors ascertained from the exchange of social support that emotional attachments between parents and adult children are not entirely necessary, it is clear that the reports from the children emphasise non-reciprocity in the social support exchange and the feeling that they give more than they receive (in relations that do not include a strong emotional attachment).

Methods

In this section, data and methods are described. This representative, cross-sectional study includes data on personal support networks of Slovene inhabitants (Ferligoj⁸ et al., 2002). The data was collected using computer-assisted telephone interviews. Respondents were aged 18 years and more and there was no limitation on the upper age limit. The sample size was 5013. The survey details can be found in Hlebec et al., 2010. This paper focuses on emotional support and intergenerational ties as providers of emotional support.

As Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) allows a numerical dependent variable and a combination of nominal, ordinal and numerical independent variables (Andrews et al., 1973) it was chosen as a tool for analysing the effects of the demographic variables and two characteristics of the ties in the composition of social support networks. For each predictor two measures of the overall effect were obtained; in addition we also obtained MCA Eta and MCA Beta coefficients. The MCA Eta coefficient measures the strength of the bivariate relationship between a dependent variable and a predictor. On the other hand, MCA Beta coefficients measure the strength of the relationship, controlled by the other independent variables in the model. The rank order of the Betas indicates the relative importance of the independent variables in their explanation of the dependent variable. Finally, the multiple R^2 - indicating the total proportion of variance explained by all independent variables together - is estimated.

The dependent variable that we are interested in is the proportion of respondents' informal network that provides emotional support to the respondent. We are interested in intergenerational ties. All possible

⁸ Ferligoj, Anuška et al. (2002): *Omrežja socialnih opor prebivalstva Slovenije (Social support networks in Slovenia)*. Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede in Inštitut Republike Slovenije za socialno varstvo.

intergenerational ties within the close family were taken into account (parents and their adult children, regardless of their age; grandparents and grandchildren) and the proportion of such ties was calculated with regard to the complete informal network (all people that the respondent reported as social support providers).

Results

Several MCA models were estimated for the interaction of independent variables. The first model took the basic demographic characteristics into account: age in categories of 10 years, gender, place of living and education. On top of this two characteristics of the ties were taken into account, i.e. how important the person is to respondent and how often he/she gets the respondent in a bad mood.

In Tables 1, 2 and 3 results of Multiple Classification Analyses (MCA) are presented. The dependent variable, the share of intergenerational ties in close family, is presented with grand mean and predicted mean values for categories of independent variables (such as age and gender). For each independent variable two measures of the overall effect are presented as well as MCA Eta and MCA Beta coefficients. For interpretation of multivariate relationships the Beta coefficient are used (MCA Beta coefficients measure the strength of the relationship, controlled by the other independent variables in the model). The rank order of the Betas indicates the relative importance of the independent variables in their explanation of the dependent variable and the multiple R^2 indicates the total proportion of variance explained by all independent variables together.

Independent variables in the first model explain about 7% of the variability in the share of intergenerational ties in the provision of emotional social support. The most important predictor variable is age, followed by education, gender and getting respondents into a bad mood. On average, intergenerational ties represent about 23% of the entire emotional support network. Even though the proportion of explained variance by the first (and the two following) MCA model is relatively small, we have to take into account, that not all relevant independent variables can be included into the same model for statistical reasons.

Table 1: INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

		<i>Intergenerational tie- close family</i>					
		Grand mean = 22,72			Predicted Mean	Deviation	
		N	Eta	Beta	Adjusted for Factors	Adjusted for Factors	
Age	18-29	987	0,210	0,178	22,916	0,194	***
	30-39	500			16,328	-6,394	
	40-49	460			15,474	-7,248	
	50-59	473			22,974	0,253	
	60-69	373			26,301	3,580	
	70 +	328			37,635	14,914	
Gender	Male	1326	0,097	0,086	19,201	-3,521	***
	Female	1796			25,321	2,599	
Place of living	Rural	1416	0,068	0,036	23,932	1,210	
	Suburban	632			20,656	-2,065	
	Urban	1073			22,340	-0,381	
Education	Vocational school or less	1611	0,136	0,094	25,912	3,191	***
	High school or more	1511			19,321	-3,401	
Importance of person	Other	553	0,033	0,011	21,913	-0,808	
	Very important	2568			22,896	0,174	
Gets you in bad mood	Other	2571	0,089	0,043	22,022	-0,699	**
	Never	550			25,989	3,268	
Multiple R2				0,065			

Intergenerational ties are more important as a provider of emotional support for older respondents (especially the oldest (70+)), women and respondents with lower education. While the evaluation of importance has no significant effect, the harmoniousness of the relationship between the respondent and emotional support provider is important. Respondents were more likely to identify an intergenerational tie as a source of emotional support if the named person did not upset the respondent. Place of living had no effect on the share of intergenerational ties as a source of emotional support.

Data shows that gender importantly structures the family intergenerational emotional solidarity – this is shown in the higher share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support for women than for men. Traditionally the relation between mother and daughter is closer than the one between a son and a parent (regardless of gender). To a certain extent the special relation between the female members of the family is down to the role of women as kin-keepers (Falk and Falk, 2005: 730).

As regards the age of the respondents the data on the shares of intergenerational support ties indicate that emotional solidarity is on decline from the category of the young adults (age group between 18 and 29) towards the middle aged adults (age groups between 30 and 39 and 40 and 49) and starts growing after the age of fifty, continues to grow after the age of sixty and reaches its peak in the 70+ age group. A lower share of intergenerational emotional solidarity in the middle ages indicates the priority of family and work roles – the interests, goals and emotions are directed towards and focused around forming the family and work or career, and this influences the poorer integration of adult children with parents; the partner is a more important source of emotional support. The higher shares of intergenerational ties that provide emotional social support and the more integrated intergenerational relations that result from this once an individual reaches 50 years of age is explained by the frailty and the dependency that appears with age and the role of the emotional guardian or ‘attachment figure’ that the adult child assumes. Our results confirm the ascertainment of Silverstein and Bengtson (1997) who stated that as the children grow older the relations between the generations are transformed. In accordance to the theoretical perspective of the life cycle we have observed that the younger adult children (18 to 29 years of age) are more likely to have integrated relations with their parents than adult children in the 30 to 49 age group. Or as concluded by Silverstein and Bengtson (1997: 452): ‘Children in young adulthood are enmeshed with their parents to satisfy emotional and material needs resulting from their transition to independence, and middle-aged children disengage from their parents because alternative family and occupational demands may supersede functional integration with them’.

In order to allow also for other independent variables, the age groups were abandoned in the following two MCA analyses. The second MCA analyses included household composition, as well as age, gender and two evaluations of the quality of ties. These five variables explain approximately 6% of the variability related to the intergenerational ties within the emotional social support network. Age remains the most important predictor variable, followed by household composition, gender and ambivalent feelings. Intergenerational ties are more important for people living on their own, single parent families and people living in multigenerational households.

Table 2: INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

		<i>Intergenerational tie – close family</i>					
		Grand mean = 22,70			Predicted Mean	Deviation	
		N	Eta	Beta	Adjusted for Factors	Adjusted for Factors	
Age	18-29	983	0,182	0,154	22,193	-0,506	***
	30-59	1433			18,378	-4,321	
	60+	701			32,243	9,544	
Gender	Male	1324	0,100	0,073	19,717	-2,982	***
	Female	1792			24,902	2,203	
Household composition	Living alone	306	0,177	0,129	30,492	7,793	***
	Single parent family	310			31,224	8,525	
	Couple without children	446			16,121	-6,578	
	Couple with children	1477			21,309	-1,390	
	Multigenerational household	211			24,197	1,498	
	Other	366			21,722	-0,977	
Importance of person	Other	553	0,033	0,010	21,916	-0,783	***
	Very important	2563			22,868	0,169	
Gets you in bad mood	Other	2566	0,090	0,056	21,784	-0,915	***
	Never	550			26,969	4,270	
Multiple R2				0,060			

In the third model, marital status was examined as predictor variable. Five predictor variables explain approximately 7% of the variability in the share of intergenerational ties. Marital status is an even more important predictor of the share of intergenerational ties than age (there is, of course, an interaction between age and marital status; younger respondents tend to be single, older respondents are more likely to be widowed). Intergenerational support is most important for widowed or divorced respondents. The absence of the partner is significant for both categories, as well as for category single. Single respondents also tend to have a larger share of intergenerational ties.

Table 3: INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

		<i>Intergenerational tie – close family</i>					
		Grand mean = 22,70			Predicted Mean	Deviation	
		N	Eta	Beta	Adjusted for Factors	Adjusted for Factors	
Age	18- 29	987	0,181	0,129	19,400	-3,304	***
	30-59	1433			20,885	-1,819	
	60 +	701			31,074	8,371	
Gender	Male	1325	0,097	0,062	20,176	-2,527	***
	Female	1795			24,570	1,866	
Marital status	Single	989	0,221	0,183	27,234	4,531	***
	Married or living as married	1706			17,188	-5,516	
	Divorced, widowed	426			34,278	11,575	
Importance of person	Other	552	0,034	0,009	22,000	-0,704	***
	Very important	2568			22,855	0,151	
Gets you in bad mood	Other	2570	0,090	0,058	21,766	-0,937	***
	Never	550			27,082	4,378	
Multiple R2				0,070			

Data suggests that married adult children (or children who live with a partner) emotionally distance themselves from their original family and focus on their partners and children. On the other hand divorced children are more likely to have a greater share of intergenerational emotional support in the family. The data also leads to the conclusion that for a large share of the elderly widowhood brings - following the loss of their partner as the carrier of (emotional) support upon which they relied throughout their adult life - a need for encouraging the rearrangement of their emotional support ties, as they tend to depend and lean more on their adult children.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to study the share of intergenerational ties in emotional support and compare them to other ties within social networks and search for the indicators of the presence of intergenerational emotional support. The hypotheses were founded on the theoretical starting points of

intergenerational emotional solidarity. We have ascertained gender differences – women have a greater share of family intergenerational emotional support than man, which indicates a continuity of the traditional gender division of work within the family, according to which it is the women who are in charge of maintaining contacts and the cultivation of (emotional) relations. Adult daughters and mothers are more likely to show intergenerational emotional solidarity than adult sons and fathers.

Age has also shown itself as an extremely important indicator of the share of intergenerational support. The emotional ties between adult children and parents are also influenced by the characteristics of the various developmental or life cycles, which the older children experience at a certain age. The child experiences emotional support within the family differently in his twenties than he does in his middle age (between 30 and 49 years of age): intergenerational support that they receive from their parents in the early life is reduced as they become older, for in this period the importance of the partner takes over. With age the share of intergenerational solidarity rises, and emotional support is increasingly provided by the adult children.

Place of living had no effect on the share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support, whereas respondents with lower education had a somewhat higher share of intergenerational ties. As assumed, respondents who live alone or respondents who live in a single parent family or in a multigenerational household have a higher share of intergenerational ties that provide emotional support. Similarly, widowed or divorced respondents and single respondents have a higher share of intergenerational ties within the emotional support network.

The hypothesis that individuals who offer emotional support include family members who are considered to be important by the respondents was not verified. Emotional care is therefore not motivated merely with the relations of attachment and the reciprocal feelings of closeness, it can also be a reflection of normative expectations that define that family members have to offer emotional support. However, the importance of the quality of such a relation for intergenerational family ties cannot be denied: individuals who annoy the respondent are less likely to be those to whom one turns for emotional support.

The proportion of explained variance by the first (and the two following) MCA model is relatively small (about 7%) as not all relevant independent variables can be included into the same model for statistical reasons. The data used in the paper were secondary data, not collected for the purposes of this article, which may also contribute to a low share of explained variance. We also assume that indicators, used for evaluation of emotional closeness and ambivalence, are not the best proxies of theoretical variables of the quality of intergenerational ties.

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