



PATTERNS OF INTERGENERATIONAL SUPPORT AND RECIPROCITY IN LUXEMBOURG

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Background

Along with demographic changes regarding increasing life expectancies and lower fertility rates, members of different generations within the family spend more and more life time together. In line with these developments, intergenerational relations gain importance with the exchange of support and reciprocity being key issues. Referring to theoretical models of intergenerational solidarity, the present study aims to examine reciprocity of intergenerational support exchange as well as its relation to relationship quality and family norms in Luxembourg.

Method

A sample of 31 three-generation families (adolescent daughters, mothers, and grandmothers) with Luxembourgish origin as well as 21 two-generation families with Portuguese origin (adolescent daughters and mothers) living in Luxembourg was studied by means of a standardized questionnaire measuring perceived support provision and reception, relationship quality as well as adherence to family norms.

Results

In the first step, patterns of emotional and instrumental support exchange were identified and different generations and cultural groups were compared. Analyses showed that while most participants perceived to give more than to receive regarding emotional support, different patterns occurred with respect to instrumental support: In Portuguese families, the exchange of this kind of support was perceived as balanced, but in Luxembourgish families, middle generation was clearly perceived as net provider by all three generations. In the second step, an indirect measure of reciprocity was applied in order to study the relation between support balance and relationship quality as well as family norms. These analyses underlined the importance of reciprocity especially for the quality of intergenerational relations in Luxembourgish families.

Conclusions

Results are discussed with respect to intrafamilial processes underlying the regulation of intergenerational relations by taking into account cross-cultural differences in value orientations and family norms.

