

# Casework Intervention on Intergenerational Education

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**Abstract:** Intergenerational education is very common among aging population and at the time when birth restrictions are lifted. Studies have shown that intergenerational education proceeds negatively and has issues in which children develop psychological problems when the knowledge of the elderly do not keep up with the younger generations', the older educational ideas struggle against the modern ones, and so on, that further bring issues in the lack of self-identity and capacity from grandparents. Bad relationships between family members can affect the family, particularly in the communication between elderly caregivers and their grandchildren. It could further influence the parent-child relationship if unpleasant emotions pile up.

**Keywords:** Casework intervention; Intergenerational education

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**Publication date:** July 2021; **Online publication:** July 30, 2021

## 1. Introduction

Based on the intervention to the case of intergenerational education, this article analyzed the issues that the elderly are having in parenting on behalf of the real parents, studied the reasons, conducted intervention, and found the common issues and characteristics as well as the special issues from the elderly in regard to intergenerational education. The so-called intergenerational education is when young parents leave their children under the care of their grandparents for parenting and for them to be looked after full-time or part-time due to being divorced or preoccupied with work. In this sense, grandparents become the "new parents" who would look after their grandchildren, and their parenting is known as intergenerational education.

## 2. Casework intervention

### 2.1. Case acceptance

#### 2.1.1. Case profile

Client: Grandma Zhu (pseudonym)

Sex: Female

Age: 62

Place of birth: Foshan, Guangdong Province

#### 2.1.2. Background of the client's family

The client lived with her family in downtown. The family comprised of the client, the client's husband, the son, and grandson.

Before the client retired, she worked and looked after her grandson. She thought that it was very important to take good care of her grandson no matter how hard it was. Several years passed and her son got divorced, so four of them started to live together. The client's son did not marry again. As her grandson grew, the client felt more and more remote in the family, lacking common topics, and had conflicts with other parents. As the client's husband started having health problems due to aging, the client had to look after her husband in addition to her grandson. This made the client very stressed.

### **2.1.3. Case information**

#### **2.1.3.1. Case cause**

Contacting with the client, a basic information about the client's family had been gathered in addition to some issues pertaining the client's emotions, communication, and behaviors with her grandson. Hence, she was approached and talked into being a client.

#### **2.1.3.2. Performance**

The client rarely had time for socializing since she had spent most of her time looking after her husband and grandson. In addition, the client was quiet and an introvert.

#### **2.1.3.3. Social relationship**

The client had a good relationship with her husband and was willing to share with him. However, she seldom shares with her son and her grandson as she thought that her relationship with them was not that close. The client lived far away from her relatives, so she did not share with her relatives about her issues either. The client's neighbors occasionally babysit the client's grandson.

#### **2.1.3.4. Psychological status**

The client had an introvert personality, and she rarely expressed her ideas. Even if she did, what she had said was far from what she had truly meant, causing a lot of misunderstandings. The client was not confident, and she felt that her grandson was not close to her. She also felt guilty for being unable to provide a complete family for her grandson. Hence, she would normally agree to all her grandson's requests.

## **2.2. Analyzed and anticipated issues**

### **2.2.1. Family relationship**

The client had issues in communicating with her family members as well as in the parenting of her grandson. Doing all the housework, she was too tired to care about her grandson's inner demands, plus her introverted personality made the active interaction with her grandson impossible. The client thought that she only needed to satisfy her grandson's material needs and did not allow him to participate in any regular family matters. When arguments occurred between them, she was not able to explain herself but felt that the family had let down the child.

### **2.2.2. Psychology**

The client felt guilty every time she thought about her grandson who could not have a complete family because of her son's divorce, so she tried to fill that with materials. She would be lost if her grandson refused whatever she had given to him. Her quiet and introvert personality, as well as the lack of socializing due to endless housework resulted in poor communication and misunderstandings by other family members.

## **2.3. Service objective and scheme**

### **2.3.1. Service objective**

- 1) To help the client to realize the importance of communication; to assist her in getting back into communicating with her family members; to help to build a family support network.
- 2) To discover the client's strengths and potentials for better confidence.
- 3) To find the unreasonable ideas she held about life and guide her with positive lifestyle.

### **2.3.2. Service scheme**

#### **2.3.2.1. Phase I**

Accepting the case, building connection with the client and gathering information. Earning the client's trust with skills such as respect, sympathy, encouragement, etc. in a professional way through multiple contacts.

#### **2.3.2.2. Phase II**

Gathering information about the client from the conversations with her, then assessing the case and making the objective and scheme. Further understand about the client to summarize and analyze the reasons for what had happened. Having a small conversation with the client's grandson to understand his attitude toward the client.

#### **2.3.2.3. Phase III**

Helping the client to detect unreasonable ideas that she had and analyzing them. Guiding the client to understand and face the unreasonableness of those ideas.

#### **2.3.2.4. Phase IV**

Closing the case, summarizing, and identifying the client's changes while helping the client to deal with separation. Allowing her to recognize that she needs to change, improve her confidence, and the ability to solve problems.

## **2.4. Casework intervention service**

### **2.4.1. Initial phase of intervention: Accepting the case and building professional relationship with the client**

After establishing a professional service relationship with the client, enters the initial phase of intervention. Before specific intervention, some basic information were gathered by speaking to Grandma Zhu. The initial phase of intervention was mainly to collect information from the client as complete as possible and to build a good, trusted relationship with her.

### **2.4.2. Middle phase of intervention: Helping the client to recognize unreasonable ideas and to open up her heart**

The objective that needed to be achieved in the middle phase of intervention was to help the client recognize unreasonable ideas and gradually establish a positive attitude toward life. The client was assisted in understanding, accepting, and appreciating herself, as well as finding her own advantages during this phase. The poor communication among the family was improved through the constructed family support network and the encouragement to open up their hearts from both the client and the grandson.

### **2.4.3. Final phase of intervention: Closing the case and recognizing the client's changes**

The goal of the final phase of intervention was to recognize the client's changes, summarize the results from the case intervention, and enhance the client's confidence. While preparing to close the case, the client's emotions were paid attention to in view of separation.

## **2.5. Assessment**

### **2.5.1. Assessment on the process**

#### **2.5.1.1. Assessment on the process of building a relationship with the client**

In this process, the difficulties and needs faced by the client were understood through interviews and a case intervention program according to the information learned was designed. The client communicated with her grandson in a wrong way, resulting in a rigid relationship between the two and multiple fights. In the interview, sympathy, respect, sincerity, and listening skills were used. In addition, the interviewer also positively responded and explained on the client's queries. These had made the client feel the possibility of improving the situation. However, when trying to build a connection with the client, the interviewer irritated the client with repeated questions due to lack of experience.

#### **2.5.1.2. Assessment on the intervention**

In this phase, the client's unreasonable ideas were changed by applying the ABC emotion theory combined with a built, stable social support network. The client was encouraged to change the way she communicated with her grandson. The client was guided to discard unreasonable ideas and gain confidence by the recognized results from the changed communication. Meanwhile, the other family members were also invited to the family activity that had a better communication environment in which the client was able to understand herself better.

#### **2.5.1.3. Assessment on the follow-up**

In this phase, comparing the situation before and after the intervention, the client's changes and independent problem-solving capacity were recognized. These further enhance her confidence and successfully improved her relationship with her grandchild as well as the issues of spoiling, overprotecting, etc.

### **2.5.2. Result assessment**

#### **2.5.2.1. Self-assessment**

During the service, concerned was shown to the client with sympathy, respect, and sincerity all the time in knowing the difficulties experienced by the client and while working with the client on analyzing the cause to enhance her confidence with independent problem-solving, changing the way of communication with her grandson, and her unreasonable ideas. Due to the lack of experience in case intervention and the proficiency in using the theory and skills, some things were taken for granted and the client's emotions were handled with limited abilities.

#### **2.5.2.2. Assessment on the intervention**

Through the observation before and after the intervention, it was found that the main way of thinking, communicating, and educating had changed greatly. At the beginning of the intervention, the client had a sense of guilt toward her grandson where she could not meet her grandson's needs for a complete family, paid little attention to her grandson's life where she only met his material needs, and the way of educating

her grandson was overprotective as well as spoiling him which led to her grandson's dissatisfaction and frequent conflicts. In the middle stage of intervention, the client began to realize her unreasonable beliefs and began to change her way of thinking and communicating. In the late intervention, through exchanges and parent-child activities among the grandparents and the grandchild with the family, the client became more confident, the communication with her grandchild was more harmonious, and negative emotions were significantly reduced.

#### **2.5.2.3. Assessment on the client and her family members**

After the case was closed, the client and her family both recognized the client's changes and showed confidence in solving similar problems. The family said that they would always support the client and enhance her confidence.

The client also recognized the case intervention service and figured that she could not had made any changes without the support and encouragement from this service.

### **2.6. Closing the case and follow-up**

#### **2.6.1. Reason for closing the case**

After the case intervention service, the client was able to change her unreasonable ideas. She started to believe in her own abilities as well as the support from her family members in addition to the active communication with her grandson. Therefore, their relationship had improved. The client got rid of her wrong communication and parenting style where she would not only pay attention to her grandson's material needs but also try her best to encourage and support him while she would no longer ground her grandson at home. She started changing the way she interacted with the other family members, and she started to allow them to help out with the housework to relieve her burden. Supported by her husband, the client joined the morning Tai Chi team to get a better social support network.

#### **2.6.2. Follow-up**

After the case intervention service, the client could actively deal with the issues with her grandson, and she had the confidence to create a better life. Since the client was only spoken to through phone calls, it was difficult to go deeper in this case.

### **3. Shortcomings of intergenerational education**

Although the elderly have great experience in raising children, they lack knowledge in the aspect of the child's education where they are unable to tutor their grandchildren with scientific means. In terms of parenting style, they are more likely to spoil their grandchildren and satisfy their material needs as much as possible. Without proper discipline, children are inclined to have poor manners, psychological issues such as inferiority, arrogance, insecurity, etc., for being ignored psychologically.

Being looked after by grandparents, children are likely to have emotional loss. Children may not feel that they are being concerned or loved by their parents as they only spend minimal time with them. Hence, the affected child is inclined to have emotional barrier against his or her parents. In addition, the generation gap between the grandchild and grandparents makes the child depressed as he or she is not able to find someone to talk. As time goes by, the grandchild is more likely to become dissocial or extreme. For parents, it is also difficult for them to find a place in the relationship with their children. Even if the child goes back to his or her real parents, it still be tricky for them to get along well with one another.

From the perspective of the elderly, grandparents who take the responsibility of parenting have issues in two aspects. In reality, the elderly find that their grandchildren do not listen to them, and they are roughhouse, or sometimes, their grandchildren are very quiet in addition to other issues that cannot be dealt with their own experiences. In the context of grandparents' parenting, the elderly lack the awareness of sharing and they believe their own experiences and judgments excessively. In real life, knowledge and experiences about grandparents' parenting are communicated through casual talks. During parenting, the physical, mental, social, and financial effects caused by the responsibility that the caregiver has are called caregiver's burden or pressure. Research have shown that elderly who spend a lot of time looking after their grandchildren have higher levels of depression. Even grandparents that have good family ties but with some shares of parenting responsibilities are faced with huge stress in playing the role of a parent again. Compared with those who do not need to look after their grandchildren, elderly caregivers are faced with more pressure from time, finance, and family conflicts, and they spend more time as well as energy in disciplining their grandchildren, dealing with their poor behaviors, and bearing the stress from communication conflicts with schools as well as their own children.

#### **4. Integration of social resource into intergenerational education**

Today, the phenomenon of intergenerational education is widespread. It is particularly important to give full play to the advantages of "silver knowledge base" in alleviating the pressure of the elderly in raising children as well as changing their unreasonable parenting concepts and methods. There is also a need to integrate family, peer groups, and community resources with case intervention service.

First, the elderly caregivers need to be guided to face their own emotions and play their own advantages. In intergenerational education, there is a common phenomenon where the elderly would pay more attention to provide for the child rather than parenting them which is closely related to the quality and thinking of elderly caregivers. This kind of mode of "paying more attention to providing rather than parenting" has a negative influence on the growth of the grandchild leading to poor psychological health and relationships between family members. There is a need to guide grandparents to pay attention to their shortcomings in education, communication, and thoughts to update their educational concepts and ideas in a timely manner, constantly learn new knowledge, as well as to play their own advantages in keeping pace with the times.

At the same time, there is also a need to pay attention to the family pressure borne by the elderly caregivers in addition to provide emotional counseling, scientific knowledge teaching, and other assistance according to their needs so that they can understand their own values, pay attention to their own emotions, and also rationally see the emotions of their family members.

Second, family members should support each other and jointly undertake family tasks. The reason for intergenerational education is because parents are unable to take good care of their children due to different kinds of reasons; hence, leaving them to grandparents. At home, everyone has their own responsibilities and obligations in supporting and caring for other family members. Parents do not only have to participate in educating their children when they are free, but they should also share the family responsibilities of the elderly caregivers, care for their physical and mental health, strengthen communication in the family, take the initiative to understand the family's joys and sorrows, as well as to share their pain and happiness. This would help intergenerational education to play a greater role.

Third, there is a need to establish a special organization for intergenerational education in the community. Most elderly caregivers do not have good educational background. In addition to their relatively old education methods, they do not understand the modern education methods and concepts. At the same time, as they need to take care of their grandchildren and assume family responsibilities, their socializing time is reduced. Various forms of associations where elderly caregivers can participate in the

community should be set up to promote modern education methods and concepts in order to narrow the educational gap. Moreover, they would have the opportunity to be involved in various peer groups through these organizations, establish a new social support network in the process of cultivating interest, exchange experiences with each other, and reduce the pressure in parenting their grandchildren.

**Disclosure statement**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.