




Identifying the Strategies Used by Grandparents in Child-Rearing Across Different Cultural Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the strategies used by grandparents in child-rearing across different cultural contexts.

Methods and Materials: This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews with 37 grandparents recruited through online platforms. The study employed a purposive sampling method to ensure diversity in cultural backgrounds. The interviews were conducted online, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis with the assistance of NVivo software, following an inductive coding process to identify emerging themes. Theoretical saturation was achieved when no new themes emerged.

Findings: The results indicated that grandparents play a crucial role in their grandchildren's upbringing through four main strategies: emotional and psychological support, transmission of cultural values, disciplinary strategies, and intergenerational learning and adaptation. Grandparents provided emotional security by offering reassurance and fostering resilience, contributing to their grandchildren's psychological well-being. They actively engaged in cultural transmission through storytelling, language preservation, and reinforcing moral values, ensuring continuity of traditions. Disciplinary strategies varied, with some grandparents employing non-punitive methods such as positive reinforcement and mediation, while others adhered to stricter rule-setting. Grandparents also demonstrated adaptability by incorporating modern parenting techniques and learning from their grandchildren, particularly in digital literacy and evolving social norms.

Conclusion: The study highlights the evolving role of grandparents in child-rearing, demonstrating a balance between traditional caregiving practices and contemporary parenting adaptations. Their involvement remains essential in fostering emotional security, cultural continuity, and behavioral development in children. Given the generational shifts in parenting ideologies, intergenerational dialogue and mutual learning are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of grandparental caregiving. Future research should further examine the long-term impact of grandparental caregiving on child development.

Keywords: Grandparental caregiving, intergenerational transmission, child-rearing strategies, cultural values, emotional support, discipline, intergenerational adaptation.

1 Introduction

The role of grandparents in child-rearing is largely shaped by intergenerational relationships and the transmission of family values. Research suggests that intergenerational dynamics influence parenting styles, disciplinary strategies, and emotional support mechanisms (Fraser et al., 2024). Grandparents often act as a bridge between traditional and modern parenting methods, ensuring continuity while also adapting to evolving societal expectations (Shmakova, 2023). Studies indicate that the intergenerational transmission of caregiving styles is influenced by past experiences, cultural upbringing, and personal beliefs about parenting (Kawaguchi, 2025). Many grandparents rely on parenting models passed down from previous generations, reinforcing cultural traditions and moral values in their grandchildren's upbringing (Gemar, 2023). However, changing social structures, increased mobility, and shifts in household arrangements have led to modifications in grandparental roles (Kožljan, 2023).

One of the key aspects of grandparental involvement in child-rearing is their role in emotional and psychological support. Grandparents often serve as sources of comfort, reassurance, and guidance, particularly in single-parent or dual-income households where parents may have limited time to dedicate to their children (Gurín & Brandt, 2024). Research highlights that children raised in environments with strong grandparental involvement tend to develop higher levels of emotional resilience and psychological well-being (Scheid et al., 2020). This emotional bond between grandparents and grandchildren fosters a sense of belonging, which is particularly significant in families where intergenerational relationships are deeply valued (Salangina, 2024). The presence of grandparents can provide a buffer against psychological distress, as they often offer stability and continuity in times of family transitions, such as parental divorce or relocation (Hu et al., 2022). Many grandparents engage in active listening, positive reinforcement, and conflict resolution to nurture their grandchildren's emotional health (Isobel et al., 2019). These strategies align with the broader understanding of intergenerational solidarity, where caregiving is viewed as a reciprocal process benefiting both generations (Gültekin et al., 2022).

Another fundamental role of grandparents in child-rearing is the transmission of cultural values. This process involves teaching language, traditions, religious beliefs, and moral values, ensuring that cultural identity is preserved across generations (Kim et al., 2024). In many cultures,

grandparents play a primary role in passing down traditional customs, storytelling, and ethical teachings that shape a child's worldview (Jasmine, 2025). Studies indicate that this intergenerational transmission is particularly significant in immigrant families, where grandparents act as cultural mediators, helping children maintain a connection to their heritage while adapting to new societal norms (Földes & Savu, 2018). Through storytelling and shared experiences, grandparents reinforce social values such as respect for elders, community engagement, and personal responsibility (Larrucea-Iruretagoyena & Orue, 2023). This cultural transmission also extends to educational aspirations, where grandparents instill a strong work ethic in their grandchildren by emphasizing discipline, perseverance, and moral integrity (Cooper et al., 2019). Despite these efforts, contemporary challenges such as digital distractions and globalization have influenced the way cultural values are transmitted, often requiring grandparents to modify traditional teaching methods to align with modern contexts (Kakunje, 2024).

Beyond cultural transmission, disciplinary strategies form another key component of grandparental involvement in child-rearing. While some grandparents adhere to strict, authoritative discipline models, others adopt more lenient approaches, recognizing the evolving parenting paradigms influenced by child psychology research (Lee et al., 2021). The intergenerational transmission of disciplinary practices is often shaped by personal experiences and cultural norms, with many grandparents emphasizing consistency, respect, and structure in their methods (Mooren et al., 2023). Studies suggest that grandparents who use positive reinforcement strategies, such as praise and tangible rewards, often foster better behavioral outcomes in children than those who rely on punitive measures (Kharuhayothin & Kerrane, 2018). The shift away from punitive discipline is particularly evident in societies where psychological research has highlighted the long-term impact of harsh disciplinary tactics on child development (Vodopivec et al., 2022). Additionally, grandparents frequently engage in conflict resolution techniques, mediating sibling disputes and teaching effective communication strategies to ensure that their grandchildren develop healthy interpersonal skills (Trofholz et al., 2018). However, generational differences in discipline can sometimes create tension between parents and grandparents, as modern parenting philosophies may conflict with traditional disciplinary approaches (W. Liu, 2017).

A growing area of focus in intergenerational caregiving research is intergenerational learning and adaptation, where grandparents actively engage in learning new parenting methods, adapting to contemporary child-rearing practices, and incorporating technology into caregiving (Chen et al., 2020). This adaptive approach allows grandparents to balance tradition with modernity, ensuring that their guidance remains relevant in an era characterized by rapid technological advancements (C. Liu, 2017). Many grandparents report learning from their grandchildren, particularly in areas related to digital literacy, social norms, and educational advancements (Kožljan, 2023). This mutual learning dynamic fosters deeper intergenerational bonds, reinforcing the idea that caregiving is not a one-directional process but rather an evolving exchange of knowledge and experiences (Shmakova, 2023). Studies indicate that grandparents who embrace this adaptive approach often experience higher levels of social engagement, mental stimulation, and personal fulfillment in their caregiving roles (Hu et al., 2022). However, challenges remain, particularly in bridging generational gaps where cultural and technological shifts create differences in parenting expectations and lifestyle choices (Gemar, 2023).

As families navigate the complexities of modern life, the role of grandparents in child-rearing continues to evolve, reflecting both cultural traditions and contemporary influences. Their contributions extend beyond basic caregiving, encompassing emotional support, cultural preservation, disciplinary guidance, and intergenerational learning. This study aims to explore the diverse strategies employed by grandparents across different cultural contexts.

2 Methods and Materials

2.1 Study Design and Participants

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the strategies used by grandparents in child-rearing across different cultural contexts. The research adopts a phenomenological approach, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of grandparents. The study focuses on uncovering patterns, themes, and cultural variations in child-rearing strategies through direct engagement with participants. The sampling strategy follows a purposive approach, ensuring the inclusion of grandparents from diverse cultural backgrounds. A total of 37 participants were recruited through online platforms, with theoretical saturation determining the final sample size. The inclusion criteria

required participants to be actively involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren and willing to share their experiences in semi-structured interviews.

2.2 Measure

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interview

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews, which provided a flexible yet structured framework to explore the experiences and strategies employed by grandparents. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit narratives regarding intergenerational caregiving practices, discipline strategies, emotional support, and the transmission of cultural values. Interviews were conducted online to facilitate participation from diverse geographical locations, ensuring a wide representation of cultural perspectives. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The recorded data were then transcribed verbatim to preserve the richness of the participants' narratives.

2.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, using NVivo software to assist in coding and categorizing themes. The analytical process followed an inductive approach, beginning with initial coding to identify recurring patterns and gradually refining themes through constant comparison. The process of data analysis was iterative, involving multiple readings of the transcripts to ensure the depth and accuracy of the emerging themes. Theoretical saturation was reached when no new themes emerged, indicating that further data collection would not significantly contribute to the findings. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, peer debriefing and member checking were utilized, allowing participants to review preliminary interpretations and provide feedback. These strategies ensured that the findings accurately represented the lived experiences of the participants and reflected the diverse cultural nuances embedded in grandparenting practices.

3 Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study indicate a diverse sample of grandparents engaged in child-rearing across different cultural contexts. The final sample included 37 participants, consisting of 22 grandmothers (59.5%) and 15 grandfathers (40.5%),

reflecting a slightly higher representation of female caregivers. The age range of participants varied from 54 to 78 years, with a mean age of 65.3 years (SD = 6.7). Regarding marital status, 29 participants (78.4%) were married, while 8 (21.6%) were widowed. Participants represented a wide range of cultural backgrounds, with 12 (32.4%) identifying as Asian, 9 (24.3%) as European, 7 (18.9%) as North American, 6 (16.2%) as African, and 3 (8.1%) as Latin American. Educational attainment varied, with 11 participants (29.7%) having completed primary education, 15 (40.5%) holding a secondary education

diploma, and 11 (29.7%) possessing higher education degrees. The number of grandchildren under their care ranged from 1 to 5, with an average of 2.3 grandchildren per participant. Additionally, 28 participants (75.7%) reported living in the same household or in close proximity to their grandchildren, while 9 (24.3%) provided care remotely through frequent visits and online communication. These demographic characteristics highlight the diverse cultural and caregiving backgrounds of the grandparents, offering a rich perspective on intergenerational child-rearing practices.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Categories (Themes)	Subcategories (Subthemes)	Concepts (Open Codes)
Emotional and Psychological Support	Providing Emotional Security	Active listening, Reassurance, Encouragement, Comfort, Unconditional love
	Instilling Resilience	Teaching perseverance, Coping strategies, Emotional regulation
	Fostering a Sense of Belonging	Family storytelling, Shared traditions, Intergenerational bonding
	Managing Separation Anxiety	Video calls, Frequent visits, Transitional objects
Transmission of Cultural Values	Supporting Self-Esteem	Positive reinforcement, Recognizing achievements, Avoiding criticism
	Teaching Cultural Practices	Language preservation, Religious teachings, Traditional ceremonies
	Reinforcing Moral Values	Honesty, Respect for elders, Kindness, Responsibility
	Sharing Family History	Oral narratives, Ancestral stories, Heritage lessons
	Promoting Community Engagement	Social participation, Volunteering, Respecting societal norms
Disciplinary Strategies	Encouraging Cultural Celebrations	Holiday traditions, Festive storytelling, Ritual participation
	Instilling Work Ethic	Hard work, Discipline, Responsibility in daily tasks
	Setting Boundaries	Clear rules, Consistent consequences, Household expectations
	Teaching Conflict Resolution	Mediation, Apologizing, Understanding different perspectives
	Using Reward-Based Discipline	Praise, Tangible rewards, Special privileges
	Implementing Non-Punitive Consequences	Time-outs, Loss of privileges, Reflective discussions
	Modeling Appropriate Behavior	Leading by example, Respectful communication, Self-discipline
Intergenerational Learning and Adaptation	Adapting to Modern Parenting Styles	Balancing tradition and modernity, Accepting new discipline methods
	Learning from Grandchildren	Technology use, Changing social norms, Youth perspectives
	Bridging Generational Gaps	Mutual respect, Open communication, Encouraging independence
	Encouraging Lifelong Learning	Reading, Attending workshops, Engaging in discussions
	Providing Practical Life Skills	Cooking, Financial literacy, Household management

Grandparents play a crucial role in providing emotional and psychological support to their grandchildren. One of the key strategies in this regard is providing emotional security, which includes active listening, reassurance, and encouragement. Many grandparents emphasized their role as a source of comfort, with one participant stating, “Whenever my grandson feels down, he knows he can come to me—I always tell him everything will be okay.” Another essential aspect of support is instilling resilience, where grandparents teach perseverance, coping strategies, and emotional regulation. A participant described how she helps her granddaughter manage setbacks: “I tell her stories about my

own struggles growing up, and how I overcame them. It makes her feel stronger.” Additionally, grandparents contribute to fostering a sense of belonging through family storytelling, shared traditions, and intergenerational bonding. One grandparent remarked, “I tell them stories about our family history, so they always know where they come from.” Many also engage in managing separation anxiety, using video calls, frequent visits, and transitional objects to maintain close connections. As one interviewee explained, “We have a special bedtime call every night—it makes her feel like I’m still there with her.” Another significant role grandparents take on is supporting self-

esteem, offering positive reinforcement, recognizing achievements, and avoiding harsh criticism. A participant noted, "I always celebrate even their small successes. It gives them confidence to try new things."

Another major role grandparents play is in the transmission of cultural values, ensuring that cultural identity and traditions are maintained across generations. One way they do this is through teaching cultural practices, such as language preservation, religious teachings, and participation in traditional ceremonies. One interviewee explained, "Every weekend, I teach them songs in our native language so they never forget where they come from." Another key role is reinforcing moral values, focusing on honesty, respect for elders, kindness, and responsibility. A grandparent described, "I always remind them that kindness and respect will take them far in life." Many also emphasize sharing family history, using oral narratives, ancestral stories, and heritage lessons to connect grandchildren to their roots. One participant said, "My grandfather used to tell me stories about our family's journey, and now I do the same with my grandchildren." Grandparents also encourage community engagement, instilling respect for societal norms, social participation, and volunteering. One interviewee noted, "I always take them with me when I volunteer at the community center. It's important they learn to give back." Finally, many grandparents focus on instilling a strong work ethic, emphasizing hard work, discipline, and responsibility in daily tasks. As one participant stated, "I make sure they understand that success doesn't come easy—you have to put in the effort."

A significant aspect of grandparenting involves disciplinary strategies, where they shape their grandchildren's behavior through structured guidance. One common approach is setting boundaries, establishing clear rules, consistent consequences, and household expectations. A participant explained, "They know that at my house, there are certain rules—no backtalk, no bad language, and always respect your elders." Another effective strategy is teaching conflict resolution, using mediation, apologizing, and understanding different perspectives. One grandparent noted, "Whenever they fight, I don't just tell them to stop—I help them talk it out and understand each other." Some grandparents rely on reward-based discipline, using praise, tangible rewards, and special privileges to reinforce good behavior. A participant shared, "If they do their chores on time, I let them pick a special treat. It motivates them." Others prefer implementing non-punitive consequences, such as time-outs, loss of privileges, or reflective

discussions. As one interviewee explained, "Instead of yelling, I ask them to sit and think about what they did, then we talk about it." Finally, many grandparents model appropriate behavior, leading by example in areas like respectful communication and self-discipline. One grandparent stated, "I always show them that respect isn't just demanded—it's given, too."

Beyond discipline and values, many grandparents play a key role in intergenerational learning and adaptation, helping their grandchildren navigate a rapidly changing world. Some actively engage in adapting to modern parenting styles, balancing traditional and contemporary approaches to child-rearing. One participant noted, "I may not agree with everything parents do nowadays, but I try to adjust because times are different." Another important aspect is learning from grandchildren, where grandparents embrace technology use, changing social norms, and youth perspectives. As one interviewee said, "My grandson teaches me about social media, and I teach him about life—it's a two-way street." Grandparents also contribute to bridging generational gaps, fostering mutual respect, open communication, and independence. One participant shared, "I want them to feel comfortable coming to me about anything, even if it's something I don't fully understand." Additionally, many encourage lifelong learning, engaging in reading, attending workshops, and discussing new ideas with their grandchildren. One grandparent explained, "I believe that learning never stops, so I always try to stay curious and pass that mindset on to them." Lastly, grandparents emphasize providing practical life skills, teaching cooking, financial literacy, and household management. A participant remarked, "I teach them how to budget their pocket money—it's a small step, but it prepares them for the future."

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the diverse strategies used by grandparents in child-rearing across different cultural contexts. The results indicate that grandparents play a crucial role in providing emotional and psychological support, transmitting cultural values, disciplining their grandchildren, and adapting to evolving parenting norms. Their caregiving approaches reflect a balance between tradition and modernity, demonstrating a dynamic and context-dependent adaptation of intergenerational parenting. These findings align with existing literature on intergenerational caregiving, confirming that grandparents

continue to be central figures in their grandchildren's upbringing, particularly in families where parental presence is limited due to work commitments or other socio-economic factors (Fraser et al., 2024). The study further reveals that while some strategies remain rooted in tradition, others are modified to align with contemporary parenting ideals, demonstrating the evolving nature of grandparental roles in modern societies (Salangina, 2024).

A key finding of this study is the emotional and psychological support that grandparents provide to their grandchildren. The results indicate that grandparents contribute significantly to their grandchildren's emotional well-being by offering reassurance, fostering resilience, and instilling a sense of belonging. These findings are consistent with prior studies that emphasize the role of grandparents in providing stability and emotional guidance in the lives of children (Gurín & Brandt, 2024). Research suggests that children raised with strong grandparental involvement tend to exhibit greater emotional resilience and self-esteem due to the consistent presence of a supportive adult figure (Scheid et al., 2020). Furthermore, previous studies indicate that in households where grandparents co-reside or frequently engage in caregiving, children demonstrate lower levels of anxiety and depression (Hu et al., 2022). This suggests that the psychological security provided by grandparents serves as a protective factor against stress and emotional distress. Additionally, the findings support the argument that intergenerational emotional bonds contribute to positive social development in children by reinforcing trust, security, and effective coping mechanisms (Isobel et al., 2019).

The study also reveals that transmission of cultural values is a fundamental role played by grandparents, who instill traditions, religious beliefs, and social norms in their grandchildren. These findings corroborate existing research that highlights the role of grandparents as cultural custodians, ensuring that language, customs, and moral principles are preserved across generations (Kim et al., 2024). Studies on intergenerational transmission suggest that grandparents often act as primary educators in maintaining cultural identity, particularly in families that have migrated or experienced cultural shifts due to globalization (Jasmine, 2025). The findings align with previous research indicating that cultural preservation through grandparental storytelling and rituals strengthens familial cohesion and reinforces social belonging among younger generations (Földes & Savu, 2018). Moreover, research highlights that in collectivist cultures, grandparents play an even more

pronounced role in ensuring the continuity of cultural and moral values (Cooper et al., 2019). However, the study also highlights the challenges that grandparents face in transmitting traditional values in contemporary society, particularly when children are more exposed to external influences such as digital media and peer groups (Larrucea-Iruretagoyena & Orue, 2023). These challenges necessitate a flexible approach to cultural transmission, where grandparents modify traditional teachings to make them more relevant in modern contexts (Kožljan, 2023).

Another major finding of this study is the varied disciplinary strategies employed by grandparents, ranging from structured rule-setting to reward-based discipline. These findings support previous research indicating that grandparental disciplinary approaches are often influenced by personal parenting experiences and cultural expectations (Mooren et al., 2023). The study found that many grandparents prefer non-punitive discipline, instead using negotiation, mediation, and positive reinforcement to guide behavior. This aligns with research indicating that non-punitive discipline fosters better behavioral and emotional outcomes in children compared to harsh disciplinary methods (Kharuhayothin & Kerrane, 2018). Furthermore, the study suggests that grandparental discipline tends to be more lenient than parental discipline, often emphasizing emotional connections over strict rule enforcement (Trofholz et al., 2018). However, some generational tensions were noted, particularly in cases where grandparents' disciplinary approaches differed from those of parents. Previous studies indicate that such conflicts arise when modern parenting philosophies, which emphasize autonomy and psychological well-being, clash with traditional discipline models emphasizing obedience and structure (Vodopivec et al., 2022). The findings highlight the importance of intergenerational communication in resolving these differences, ensuring that caregiving strategies are both effective and harmonious (Lee et al., 2021).

The study also highlights intergenerational learning and adaptation, showing that grandparents actively modify their caregiving approaches based on contemporary parenting trends and their grandchildren's needs. Many participants reported learning from their grandchildren, particularly in areas related to digital literacy and changing social expectations. These findings align with research suggesting that intergenerational caregiving is not a one-directional process but rather an evolving exchange of knowledge and practices (Chen et al., 2020). Studies indicate that as social and technological landscapes change, grandparents who

remain open to adaptation experience increased social engagement and improved caregiving efficacy (C. Liu, 2017). Moreover, research supports the argument that intergenerational adaptation enhances family cohesion, as mutual learning strengthens respect and understanding between generations (Shmakova, 2023). However, challenges remain, particularly in bridging generational gaps where older caregiving methods conflict with modern parenting ideologies (Gemar, 2023). The findings emphasize the importance of fostering open dialogues between generations to ensure that caregiving strategies remain both culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate (Hu et al., 2022).

While this study provides valuable insights into the strategies used by grandparents in child-rearing, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on self-reported data from grandparents, which may introduce bias, as participants might have presented their caregiving strategies in a more favorable light. Additionally, the study focused on participants recruited through online platforms, potentially limiting the representation of grandparents who may not have access to digital communication. Cultural diversity was considered, but the study may not fully capture the nuances of grandparenting practices in less represented or marginalized communities. Furthermore, while the study aimed for theoretical saturation, additional qualitative approaches such as observational studies could provide deeper insights into grandparental caregiving in real-life contexts.

Future research should explore grandparental caregiving strategies using longitudinal designs to examine how caregiving roles evolve over time and how they impact child development in the long term. Additionally, studies comparing grandparenting strategies across different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds could provide a more comprehensive understanding of intergenerational caregiving diversity. Further research could also investigate the role of technology in shaping grandparent-grandchild relationships, particularly in the context of virtual caregiving. Moreover, exploring the perspectives of both grandchildren and parents on grandparental caregiving would provide a more holistic view of the intergenerational caregiving dynamic.

Grandparents should be encouraged to engage in open discussions with parents to align caregiving strategies and ensure consistency in discipline and value transmission. Parenting workshops that include grandparents could help bridge generational gaps by fostering a mutual

understanding of contemporary child-rearing practices. Furthermore, community programs that promote intergenerational learning can help grandparents adapt to modern caregiving challenges while reinforcing cultural traditions. Healthcare professionals and social workers should also recognize the significant role of grandparents in caregiving and provide resources to support their involvement in child-rearing. Lastly, policymakers should consider the needs of multi-generational households when designing family support programs to ensure that grandparents receive adequate assistance in their caregiving roles.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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