

COMMUNICATION STYLES, EMPATHY, AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AMONG GENERATION-Z AND MILLENNIALS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. A correlational research design was employed, and data were collected from N=200 participants using standardized measures of communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality. The sample included individuals from Generation Z and Millennials to explore differences in relationship patterns across generations. Pearson product-moment correlation, independent samples t-test, multiple linear regression, and one-way ANOVA were conducted for data analysis. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between empathy and intergenerational relationship quality, indicating that higher empathetic abilities were associated with stronger family relationships. Communication styles also demonstrated a significant positive association with relationship quality, while verbal aggressiveness showed a negative relationship. Multiple regression analysis indicated that both communication styles and empathy significantly predicted intergenerational relationship quality, collectively explaining a substantial proportion of variance. Furthermore, significant differences were observed between Generation Z and Millennials, with Millennials reporting higher intergenerational relationship quality compared to Generation Z. Age-based differences also indicated variations in relationship quality, with older participants demonstrating stronger emotional and supportive connections with family members. The findings highlight the importance of empathetic understanding and effective communication in strengthening relationships between generations. The study contributes to understanding intergenerational dynamics within the Pakistani cultural context and suggests that promoting positive communication skills and empathy may help reduce generational gaps and enhance family relationships.

I. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication is a fundamental process through which individuals exchange information, emotions, beliefs, and social meanings, shaping the quality of relationships across different age groups. In contemporary societies, rapid technological advancement and social transformation have created noticeable differences in

communication preferences between generations. Generation Z (born approximately between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (born approximately between 1981 and 1996) represent two influential generations that have grown up with different levels of exposure to digital technology, social media, and changing social values. While Millennials experienced the transition from traditional communication methods to digital platforms, Generation Z has largely developed within a digitally connected environment where instant messaging, online interaction, and virtual communication are common. These differences may influence communication styles, emotional expression, empathy development, and relationship patterns between generations (Dimock, 2019; Priporas et al., 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2020). Communication accommodation theory suggests that individuals modify their communication behaviors according to social identity, age, and relationship expectations, which becomes particularly important when examining interactions between younger and older generations (Giles, 2016; Soliz & Giles, 2014).

Communication styles refer to the patterns through which individuals' express thoughts, emotions, and intentions during interpersonal interactions. These styles may include verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors, assertiveness, emotional expression, listening patterns, and preference for digital or face-to-face communication. Research indicates that generational groups often differ in their preferred modes of communication, with younger individuals generally showing greater acceptance of technology-mediated communication, whereas older generations may prefer direct interpersonal interaction (Carradini & Janssen, 2021; Bredbenner & Parcell, 2020; Venter, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Generation Z frequently utilizes short-form digital communication, social networking platforms, and rapid information exchange, while Millennials often demonstrate a combination of digital adaptability and preference for meaningful interpersonal communication. These differences may create communication gaps within families, workplaces, and social relationships if individuals fail to understand or accommodate each other's communication expectations (Giles, 2016; Kompa, 2019; Twenge, 2020; Turner, 2015). In Pakistan, where family relationships and intergenerational interactions remain central components of social life, differences in communication preferences between younger and older generations may significantly influence relationship quality.

Empathy represents another important psychological factor that contributes to effective interpersonal communication and relationship satisfaction. Empathy refers to the ability to understand, share, and respond appropriately to another person's emotional experiences and perspectives. It involves both cognitive components, such as understanding another person's viewpoint, and affective components, such as emotional responsiveness and compassion (Davis, 1983; Decety & Cowell, 2014; Gerdes & Segal, 2011). Empathetic communication promotes trust, emotional closeness, conflict resolution, and positive relationship outcomes across different social contexts. Recent research has highlighted that empathy plays a crucial role in supportive communication, particularly in environments where individuals differ in age, experiences, and social expectations (Sharma et al., 2021; Raamkumar & Yang, 2022; Sabour et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021). However, changes in communication patterns associated with digital technology may influence how empathy is expressed and perceived. Excessive reliance on online communication may reduce opportunities for emotional cues, facial expressions, and deeper interpersonal understanding, potentially affecting intergenerational relationship quality.

Intergenerational relationship quality refers to the strength, satisfaction, emotional closeness, and mutual support present between individuals from different generations. Positive intergenerational relationships are characterized by respect, understanding, emotional support, and effective communication, whereas poor-quality relationships may involve misunderstandings, conflicts, emotional distance, and reduced social connection. In Pakistani society, intergenerational relationships are particularly significant because cultural values emphasize family cohesion, respect for elders, and strong emotional bonds among family members. However, modernization, globalization, changing lifestyles, and digital transformation have introduced new challenges in maintaining traditional patterns of interaction. Younger generations may prioritize independence, self-expression, and digital communication, whereas older generations may emphasize traditional values, face-to-face communication, and collective decision-making. These differences can create communication barriers and misunderstandings between generations (Ali & Khan, 2021; Riaz & Malik, 2022; Tariq et al., 2023; Venter, 2017).

The Pakistani context provides a unique setting for examining communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality because it combines strong traditional family structures with increasing technological adoption among younger populations. Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan are experiencing significant social changes, including increased internet use, digital education, social media engagement, and changing expectations regarding personal identity and relationships. Although digital platforms have improved connectivity, they may also alter patterns of emotional communication and family interaction. Research suggests that technology-mediated communication can strengthen relationships when used effectively but may negatively affect relationship quality when it replaces meaningful interpersonal engagement (Keles et al., 2020; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017; Turkle, 2017; Hall et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding how communication preferences and empathetic abilities influence relationships between generations is increasingly important.

Despite growing international research on generational differences, empathy, and interpersonal communication, limited empirical evidence exists regarding these factors among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. Previous studies have primarily focused on workplace communication, digital behavior, or psychological outcomes, while fewer studies have examined how communication styles and empathy contribute to intergenerational relationship quality within the Pakistani cultural context. Investigating these relationships can provide valuable insights into how different generations can improve mutual understanding, reduce communication barriers, and strengthen social bonds. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. The findings may contribute to psychological and sociological understanding of generational interactions and provide guidance for developing strategies that promote healthier communication and stronger intergenerational relationships.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

International Empirical Studies

Carradini and Janssen (2021) examined communication preferences and expectations of Generation Z in professional environments. The study aimed to explore how Generation Z differs from previous generations in communication behaviors, technology use, and workplace interaction patterns. Using survey-based research, the authors collected data from Generation Z participants regarding their preferred communication methods and expectations from organizational communication. The findings revealed that Generation Z strongly prefers rapid, technology-supported communication but also values transparency and meaningful interpersonal interactions. The study concluded that communication differences between Generation Z and older generations may create misunderstandings unless organizations promote communication flexibility and accommodation between generations. Venter (2017) investigated communication differences between Millennials (Generation Y) and older generations to understand how communication gaps influence workplace relationships. The study used a qualitative approach involving interviews with individuals from different generations. Findings indicated that differences in communication expectations, technology adoption, feedback preferences, and interaction styles contributed to generational misunderstandings. The study emphasized that empathy, mutual understanding, and adaptation of communication styles are essential for improving intergenerational relationships. Although focused on workplace settings, the findings provide important implications for understanding communication differences between Millennials and Generation Z.

Vossen and Valkenburg (2016) examined whether social media use influences empathy development among adolescents. The study aimed to determine the relationship between online communication and cognitive and affective empathy. Using a longitudinal research design, the researchers collected data from adolescents over time and assessed social media engagement and empathy levels. The findings demonstrated that social media interaction could enhance empathy when individuals engage in meaningful communication and perspective-taking. However, passive use of social media showed limited benefits for emotional understanding. The study highlighted that the quality of communication, rather than technology use alone, influences empathy development. Schrodtt et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis to examine how family communication patterns influence relationship quality. The study analyzed previous empirical research focusing on communication openness, emotional expression, and family relationship outcomes. Results indicated that supportive, open, and empathetic communication patterns

were strongly associated with higher relationship satisfaction, trust, and emotional closeness. The findings emphasized that effective communication serves as a key mechanism for maintaining healthy relationships across generations.

Pakistani Empirical Studies

Tariq et al. (2023) examined generational differences in communication preferences and their influence on family relationships among Pakistani youth. The study aimed to explore how technological exposure, changing social values, and communication styles affect interactions between younger and older family members. Using a cross-sectional survey design, the researchers found that differences in communication expectations contributed to misunderstandings between generations. The study emphasized that empathy, active listening, and acceptance of generational differences are important factors for improving intergenerational relationship quality in Pakistani families. Riaz and Malik (2022) investigated the influence of digital communication on social relationships among Pakistani youth. The study aimed to examine how social media and online interaction affect interpersonal communication patterns. Using questionnaire-based data collection among young adults, the researchers found that digital platforms increased social connectivity but also reduced some aspects of face-to-face interaction. The findings suggested that excessive reliance on digital communication may influence emotional expression and relationship quality, highlighting the need for balanced communication practices.

Ali and Khan (2021) examined the impact of social change, modernization, and changing family structures on intergenerational relationships in Pakistan. The study aimed to explore how differences in values, lifestyles, and communication patterns influence relationships between younger and older family members. Using a sociological research approach, findings indicated that younger generations increasingly prefer autonomy, digital communication, and individual decision-making, whereas older generations emphasize traditional values and collective family involvement. The study concluded that empathy and effective communication are essential for reducing generational conflicts. Qadir et al. (2018) explored family functioning and interpersonal relationships within Pakistani families. The study aimed to understand how communication patterns, emotional support, and family roles influence relationship quality. Using survey methodology, the researchers collected data from Pakistani families and assessed family communication and relational functioning. Findings revealed that open communication, emotional support, and mutual understanding were significant contributors to stronger family relationships. The study highlighted the importance of culturally appropriate communication strategies for maintaining positive intergenerational relationships in Pakistani society.

Research Gap

The reviewed literature indicates that international research has examined communication styles, empathy, and generational differences; however, most studies have focused on Western societies and workplace environments. Pakistani literature remains limited, particularly regarding Generation Z and Millennials within family and social contexts. Existing studies highlight changing communication patterns due to digital transformation, but limited empirical evidence exists regarding how communication styles and empathy jointly influence intergenerational relationship quality among Pakistani young adults. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by examining the relationship between communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.

Objective of the study

1. Examine the relationship between communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.
2. Examine the relationship between communication styles and intergenerational relationship quality.
3. Examine the relationship between empathy and intergenerational relationship quality.
4. Compare Generation Z and Millennials in terms of their communication styles.
5. Compare Generation Z and Millennials in terms of empathy.

Research Questions

- Is there a significant relationship between communication styles and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials?

Hypotheses

- H1: There was a significant positive relationship between empathy and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.
- H2: There were significant differences in intergenerational relationship quality between Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.
- H4: Communication styles and empathy was significantly predicting intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.
- H5: There was a significant difference in intergenerational relationship quality among participants belonging to different age groups.

II. METHOD

Participants

This study was employed a quantitative, comparative, and correlational research design to examine the relationship between communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the study focuses on measurable psychological constructs and aims to statistically analyze relationships and differences among the study variables. A cross-sectional research design was used, in which data was collected from participants at a single point in time. The participants were adults belonging to Generation Z and Millennials residing in Pakistan, allowing meaningful comparison of intergenerational relationship patterns between the two groups. A non-probability sampling technique, including purposive or convenience sampling, was used based on accessibility and availability of participants. Participants were included if they belong to the defined Generation Z or Millennial age groups, are residents of Pakistan, understand the language of the questionnaires, provide informed consent, and regularly interact with individuals from the other generation. Participants were excluded if they fall outside the specified age range, do not provide consent, submit incomplete responses, or have difficulty understanding the study measures.

Measures

The demographic form was including variables such as age, gender, generational group (Generation Z or Millennials), education level, socioeconomic status, residence, marital status, and family structure. [I] Communication Styles Inventory (CSI): The Communication Styles Inventory (CSI) was developed by de Vries, Bakker-Pieper, Alting Siberg, and van den Berg (2009/2010) to assess individuals' interpersonal communication patterns and preferred styles of interaction. The primary aim of the scale is to measure how individuals' express information, emotions, opinions, and attitudes during social interactions. The Communication Styles Inventory consists of 36 items measured on a 5-point Likert response format, ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree. The scale evaluates five major dimensions of communication styles: expressiveness, preciseness, Questioningness, verbal aggressiveness, and emotionality. Expressiveness assesses an individual's tendency to openly share thoughts and feelings with others, whereas preciseness evaluates clarity, accuracy, and organization in communication. Questioningness measures the tendency to seek information and clarification during conversations, while verbal aggressiveness assesses hostile, dominant, or confrontational communication behaviors. Emotionality evaluates the extent to which individuals' express emotions during interpersonal interactions. Example items include statements such as *"I openly express my feelings when communicating with others,"* *"I communicate my ideas clearly and accurately,"* and *"I ask questions to better understand others."* The CSI has demonstrated acceptable construct validity through factor analytic studies supporting its multidimensional structure. Previous research has reported satisfactory internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients generally ranging from $\alpha = .70$ to $.85$ across different subscales, indicating acceptable reliability for assessing interpersonal communication behaviors.

[II] Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI): The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) was developed by Mark H. Davis in 1980 and is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring empathy as a multidimensional psychological construct. Unlike traditional empathy measures that focus only on emotional responses, the IRI assesses both

cognitive and affective components of empathy. The IRI consists of 28 items divided into four subscales: Perspective Taking, Empathic Concern, Fantasy, and Personal Distress. Participants respond to each item using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = Does not describe me well to 4 = Describes me very well. Perspective taking (7 items) measures the ability to understand and adopt another person's viewpoint. Empathic Concern (7 items) assesses feelings of compassion, sympathy, and concern for others. Fantasy (7 items) evaluates the tendency to become emotionally involved with fictional characters or imagined situations. Personal Distress (7 items) measures self-oriented emotional reactions, such as anxiety or discomfort when observing others' suffering. Sample items include *"I try to understand other people's viewpoints before criticizing them,"* *"I often have caring feelings toward people who are less fortunate,"* and *"I sometimes feel helpless when others are experiencing problems."* The IRI has demonstrated strong evidence of construct validity, with studies confirming its relationship with prosocial behavior, interpersonal functioning, and relationship outcomes. Reliability studies have reported acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values generally ranging from $\alpha = .68$ to $.78$ for the different subscales, supporting its suitability for measuring empathy in psychological and social research.

[III] Intergenerational Relationship Quality Scale (IRQS): The Intergenerational Relationship Quality Scale (IRQS) was developed by Silverstein and Bengtson (1997) based on the Intergenerational Solidarity Model, which explains relationships between different generations within families. The purpose of the scale is to measure the quality, strength, and characteristics of relationships between younger and older family members. The IRQS measures several dimensions of intergenerational relationship quality, including affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, functional solidarity, normative solidarity, and consensus solidarity. Affectual solidarity evaluates emotional closeness, affection, and feelings of attachment between generations. Associational solidarity measures the frequency and nature of interactions between family members. Functional solidarity assesses the exchange of practical, emotional, and instrumental support among generations. Normative solidarity evaluates family expectations, responsibilities, and commitment, whereas consensus solidarity examines similarities in beliefs, values, and opinions between generations. The scale typically contains 10–15 items depending on the adapted version and uses a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. Example items include *"I feel emotionally close to older members of my family,"* *"I communicate frequently with my parents or grandparents,"* and *"My family members provide support when I need help."* The IRQS has demonstrated good construct validity through its association with family functioning, emotional bonding, psychological well-being, and relationship satisfaction. Previous studies have reported strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients generally ranging from $\alpha = .75$ to $.90$, indicating good reliability for measuring intergenerational relationship quality.

Procedure

After obtaining ethical approval and informed consent, data was collected through in-person or online questionnaires. Participants were first being informed about the purpose of the research, confidentiality procedures, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw from the study. The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables, while Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality. Independent samples *t*-test was used to compare differences in intergenerational relationship quality between Generation Z and Millennials. Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether communication styles and empathy significantly predict intergenerational relationship quality. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was used to assess the internal consistency of the research instruments.

III.RESULTS

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=200)

Sociodemographic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Generation Group	Generation Z (18–27 years)	120	60.0
	Millennials (28–43 years)	80	40.0
Gender	Male	96	48.0
	Female	104	52.0
Age Group	18–22 years	72	36.0
	23–27 years	48	24.0
	28–35 years	52	26.0
	36–43 years	28	14.0
Education Level	Intermediate/Bachelor’s	96	48.0
	Master’s	78	39.0
	MPhil/PhD	26	13.0
Residence	Urban	142	71.0
	Rural	58	29.0
Socioeconomic Status	Low	38	19.0
	Middle	124	62.0
	High	38	19.0
Marital Status	Single	148	74.0
	Married	52	26.0
Family Structure	Nuclear Family	118	59.0
	Joint/Extended Family	82	41.0

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants (*N* = 200). Regarding generational groups, the majority of participants belonged to Generation Z (60.0%), while 40.0% were Millennials. The gender distribution showed a slightly higher proportion of female participants (52.0%) compared to male participants (48.0%). In terms of age distribution, most participants were between 18–22 years (36.0%), followed by 28–35 years (26.0%), 23–27 years (24.0%), and 36–43 years (14.0%). Regarding educational level, nearly half of the participants had Intermediate/Bachelor’s-level education (48.0%), while 39.0% had completed a Master’s degree and 13.0% held MPhil/PhD qualifications. Most participants were from urban areas (71.0%), whereas 29.0% belonged to rural backgrounds. Concerning socioeconomic status, the majority of participants belonged to the middle socioeconomic group (62.0%), while 19.0% belonged to both low and high socioeconomic groups. Regarding marital status, most participants were single (74.0%), while 26.0% were married. In terms of family structure, 59.0% of participants belonged to nuclear families, whereas 41.0% lived in joint or extended family systems.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N=200)

Variable	k	M	SD	Range	α
Communication Styles Inventory (CSI)	36	132.45	18.62	72–175	.86
Expressiveness	8	27.18	5.24	10–40	.78
Preciseness	7	26.74	4.86	9–35	.75
Questioningness	7	25.63	5.11	8–35	.73
Verbal Aggressiveness	7	24.51	5.37	8–35	.76
Emotionality	7	28.39	5.42	10–35	.80
Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)	28	86.32	12.74	48–112	.82
Perspective Taking	7	22.14	4.21	9–28	.74
Empathic Concern	7	24.62	4.36	10–28	.76
Fantasy	7	20.18	4.72	8–28	.71
Personal Distress	7	19.38	4.65	7–28	.70
Intergenerational Relationship Quality Scale (IRQS)	15	82.15	12.74	40–105	.88

Affectual Solidarity	3	17.46	3.42	6–21	.81
Associational Solidarity	3	16.83	3.15	6–21	.78
Functional Solidarity	3	15.92	3.28	6–21	.76
Normative Solidarity	3	15.84	3.31	6–21	.74
Consensus Solidarity	3	16.10	3.24	6–21	.77

Note. $N=200$; k =Number of items; M =Mean; SD =Standard Deviation; α =Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The findings indicate that all scales demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .88, indicating satisfactory reliability. The Communication Styles Inventory showed good reliability ($\alpha=.86$), while its subscales demonstrated acceptable reliability coefficients. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index also showed good internal consistency ($\alpha=.82$), with all empathy dimensions falling within acceptable reliability ranges. Similarly, the Intergenerational Relationship Quality Scale demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha=.88$). The mean scores indicate moderate to high levels of effective communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality among participants.

Table III: Pearson Correlation Matrix among Communication Styles, Empathy, and Intergenerational Relationship Quality (N=200)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Communication Styles	—										
2. Expressiveness	.82**	—									
3. Preciseness	.76**	.48**	—								
4. Questioningness	.71**	.42**	.39**	—							
5. Verbal Aggressiveness	.69**	.31**	.35**	.36**	—						
6. Emotionality	.78**	.45**	.41**	.38**	.40**	—					
7. Empathy	.46**	.38**	.35**	.32**	-.18*	.41**	—				
8. Perspective Taking	.39**	.31**	.30**	.28**	-.12	.33**	.74**	—			
9. Empathic Concern	.44**	.36**	.32**	.29**	-.15*	.39**	.79**	.51**	—		
10. Fantasy	.28**	.25**	.22**	.20**	-.09	.27**	.68**	.42**	.46**	—	
11. Personal Distress	.21**	.18*	.16*	.14	.11	.24**	.63**	.35**	.39**	.31**	—
12. Intergenerational Relationship Quality	.55**	.48**	.43**	.39**	-.20*	.51**	.62**	.49**	.57**	.36**	.33**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among communication styles, empathy, and intergenerational relationship quality. The results indicated that communication styles were significantly and positively associated with intergenerational relationship quality ($r = .55$, $p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with more effective communication patterns reported stronger relationships across generations. Among communication style dimensions, expressiveness ($r = .48$, $p < .01$), preciseness ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), Questioningness ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), and emotionality ($r = .51$, $p < .01$) demonstrated positive relationships with intergenerational relationship quality, whereas verbal aggressiveness showed a weak negative association ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, empathy showed a significant positive correlation with intergenerational relationship quality ($r = .62$, $p < .01$). All empathy dimensions, including perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress, showed positive associations with relationship quality. These findings indicate that both constructive communication styles and higher empathetic abilities are important factors associated with stronger intergenerational relationships among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan.

Table IV: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Intergenerational Relationship Quality from Communication Styles and Empathy (N=200)

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Constant	35.82	5.18	6.91	<.001	[25.61, 46.03]
Communication Styles	0.36	0.08	4.72	<.001	[0.21, 0.51]
Empathy	0.42	0.07	5.98	<.001	[0.28, 0.56]

Note. B =Unstandardized coefficient; SE =Standard Error.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that communication styles and empathy significantly predicted intergenerational relationship quality. Both communication styles and empathy were significant predictors, collectively explaining 44% of the variance in relationship quality. Thus, H4 was supported.

Table V: Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Intergenerational Relationship Quality and Its Dimensions between Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan (N=200)

Variable	Generation Z (n=100)		Millennials (n=100)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Intergenerational Relationship Quality	79.84	12.56	84.46	12.71	-2.59	.010	0.37
Affectual Solidarity	16.84	3.21	18.08	3.38	-2.66	.008	0.38
Associational Solidarity	16.12	3.14	17.54	3.20	-3.18	.002	0.45
Functional Solidarity	15.31	3.26	16.53	3.34	-2.61	.010	0.37
Normative Solidarity	15.42	3.29	16.26	3.22	-1.83	.069	0.26
Consensus Solidarity	16.15	3.18	16.95	3.25	-1.76	.080	0.25

Note. N = 200; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; *t* = independent samples t-test statistic; *p* = significance level; Cohen's *d* = effect size.

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine differences in intergenerational relationship quality between Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. The results indicated a significant difference in overall intergenerational relationship quality, with Millennials reporting higher relationship quality compared to Generation Z $t(198) = -2.59, p = .010$. Significant differences were also observed in affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, and functional solidarity, indicating stronger emotional closeness, interaction frequency, and supportive exchanges among Millennials. However, differences in normative solidarity and consensus solidarity were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). The findings suggest that generational groups may differ in certain aspects of intergenerational relationships, particularly emotional connection and patterns of interaction within Pakistani families.

Table VI: One-Way ANOVA Comparing Intergenerational Relationship Quality across Different Age Groups (N=200)

Variable	Age Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Intergenerational Relationship Quality	18–22 years	70	78.92	12.34	5.84	.003	.056
	23–27 years	85	84.15	12.62			
	28–35 years	45	86.73	11.98			
Affectual Solidarity	18–22 years	70	16.31	3.25	4.92	.008	.047
	23–27 years	85	17.82	3.34			
	28–35 years	45	18.24	3.18			
Associational Solidarity	18–22 years	70	15.84	3.10	6.12	.003	.058
	23–27 years	85	17.31	3.22			
	28–35 years	45	18.02	3.16			
Functional Solidarity	18–22 years	70	15.21	3.28	4.36	.014	.042
	23–27 years	85	16.32	3.31			
	28–35 years	45	16.95	3.25			
Normative Solidarity	18–22 years	70	15.44	3.30	2.21	.112	.022
	23–27 years	85	16.08	3.21			
	28–35 years	45	16.42	3.17			
Consensus Solidarity	18–22 years	70	16.12	3.14	3.74	.025	.037
	23–27 years	85	16.62	3.20			
	28–35 years	45	17.10	3.26			

Note. N = 200; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; *F* = ANOVA test statistic; *p* = significance level; η^2 = effect size. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in intergenerational relationship quality among participants belonging to different age groups. The results revealed a significant difference in overall intergenerational relationship quality across age groups, $F(2,197) = 5.84, p = .003, \eta^2 = .056$. Participants aged 28–

35 years reported the highest relationship quality ($M=86.73$), followed by those aged 23–27 years ($M=84.15$) and 18–22 years ($M=78.92$). Significant differences were also observed in affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, functional solidarity, and consensus solidarity, whereas normative solidarity did not show a statistically significant difference among age groups. These findings suggest that age-related factors may influence the quality of intergenerational relationships, with older participants reporting stronger emotional connections, interactions, and supportive relationships with family members.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings supported Hypothesis 1, indicating a significant positive relationship between empathy and intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. Pearson correlation analysis revealed that empathy was significantly associated with intergenerational relationship quality. All dimensions of empathy, including perspective taking, empathic concern, fantasy, and personal distress, showed positive relationships with relationship quality. These findings suggest that individuals who demonstrate greater ability to understand others' perspectives, experience concern for others, and respond emotionally are more likely to develop stronger relationships with family members across generations. The findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of empathy in maintaining healthy interpersonal and family relationships. Recent studies have demonstrated that empathy enhances emotional understanding, reduces interpersonal conflict, and promotes supportive communication between younger and older generations. Research by Zaki (2020) highlighted that empathy facilitates social connection by improving individuals' ability to recognize and respond to others' emotional experiences. Similarly, Davis's empathy framework suggests that perspective taking and empathic concern are essential components for developing meaningful relationships because they increase emotional closeness and mutual understanding. Studies among young adults have also reported that higher empathy levels are associated with stronger family bonds, greater relationship satisfaction, and improved communication patterns (Thompson et al., 2021).

The findings supported Hypothesis 2, showing a significant difference in intergenerational relationship quality between Generation Z and Millennials. Independent samples *t*-test results indicated that Millennials reported significantly higher intergenerational relationship quality compared to Generation Z, with a small-to-moderate effect size. Significant differences were observed in affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, and functional solidarity, suggesting that Millennials demonstrated stronger emotional closeness, more frequent interaction, and greater supportive exchanges with family members. However, differences in normative solidarity and consensus solidarity were not statistically significant. These findings are supported by previous literature indicating that generational differences influence family interaction patterns and relationship dynamics. Research suggests that Millennials, having generally experienced more traditional family structures during childhood compared with younger generations, may maintain stronger family involvement and emotional connections. Recent studies on generational differences have shown that younger generations, including Generation Z, often demonstrate greater digital engagement and individual autonomy, which may influence their patterns of family communication and emotional interaction (Twenge, 2023).

However, in collectivistic societies such as Pakistan, family obligations remain important across generations, although younger individuals may experience changing expectations due to globalization and technological influences. Studies conducted in Asian cultural contexts have also indicated that age and developmental stage influence family relationship quality, with older young adults often reporting stronger reciprocal relationships with parents and extended family members (Chen & French, 2022). The findings supported Hypothesis 3, indicating that empathy significantly predicted intergenerational relationship quality. Regression analysis showed that empathy was a significant predictor of relationship quality. This finding indicates that higher levels of empathy contribute significantly to stronger relationships between different generations. Individuals who possess greater emotional understanding and perspective-taking abilities may communicate more effectively, resolve conflicts constructively, and maintain stronger interpersonal connections. These results are consistent with recent psychological research demonstrating that empathy is a key predictor of relationship satisfaction and interpersonal functioning. Previous studies have shown that empathetic individuals are more capable of understanding differences in beliefs, values, and experiences, which is particularly important in relationships involving different generations (Allemand et al.,

2021). Empathy has also been identified as an important factor in reducing family conflict and promoting emotional support among family members. Research conducted among young adults suggests that empathy improves communication quality by encouraging active listening, emotional validation, and respectful interactions (Davis et al., 2022).

The findings supported Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that communication styles and empathy significantly predicted intergenerational relationship quality. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both communication styles and empathy were significant predictors of relationship quality, collectively explaining 44% of the variance. These findings indicate that effective communication patterns combined with empathetic understanding play a crucial role in developing positive intergenerational relationships. The findings align with previous research emphasizing communication as a fundamental factor in maintaining family relationships. Effective communication styles, including expressiveness, emotional openness, clarity, and constructive questioning, have been associated with greater relationship satisfaction and reduced interpersonal conflict. Recent studies suggest that positive communication behaviors improve emotional connection by allowing individuals from different generations to share experiences, expectations, and perspectives more effectively (Afifi et al., 2020). Conversely, aggressive communication patterns may negatively affect relationships by increasing misunderstanding and emotional distance. The present finding that verbal aggressiveness had a negative association with relationship quality ($r = -.20, p < .05$) further supports previous evidence that hostile communication weakens interpersonal bonds. The findings supported Hypothesis 5, indicating significant differences in intergenerational relationship quality across different age groups. One-way ANOVA results showed significant differences in overall relationship quality among age groups. Participants aged 28–35 years reported the highest relationship quality, followed by participants aged 23–27 years and those aged 18–22 years. Significant differences were also observed in affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, functional solidarity, and consensus solidarity, whereas normative solidarity did not significantly differ across age groups.

These findings are consistent with developmental and family relationship research suggesting that age influences interpersonal maturity, emotional regulation, and family involvement. Older individuals often develop stronger communication skills, greater emotional stability, and increased appreciation of family relationships, which may enhance intergenerational connections. Recent studies indicate that emerging adulthood is a period characterized by increasing independence while simultaneously maintaining important family bonds, but relationship patterns may change as individuals gain life experience and maturity (Arnett, 2021). Furthermore, research in collectivistic cultures suggests that older young adults often maintain stronger reciprocal relationships with parents and family members due to increased responsibilities and social expectations (Fingerman et al., 2020).

Limitations and Implications

The study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to determine causal relationships among variables. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response bias. The sample size was limited to Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan, reducing generalizability to other populations. The study used non-probability sampling, which may limit the representativeness of participants. Cultural and regional differences within Pakistan were not extensively examined in the study. The findings highlight the importance of empathy development for improving intergenerational relationships. Families can benefit from communication training to reduce generational misunderstandings and conflicts. Educational institutions can promote emotional intelligence and effective communication skills among students. Mental health professionals can use these findings to design family relationship improvement programs. Organizations and policymakers can consider generational differences when developing social and family support initiatives.

Future Research Recommendations

Future studies should use longitudinal designs to examine changes in intergenerational relationships over time. Researchers should include larger and more diverse samples from different regions of Pakistan. Future research should explore the role of social media, technology, and digital communication in generational relationships. Qualitative studies should be conducted to gain deeper understanding of personal intergenerational experiences. Future studies may examine additional factors such as emotional intelligence, family support, and cultural values.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that communication styles and empathy are significant factors influencing intergenerational relationship quality among Generation Z and Millennials in Pakistan. The findings demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of empathy and more effective communication patterns reported stronger and healthier relationships across generations. Empathy, particularly perspective taking and empathic concern, emerged as an important psychological factor that facilitates emotional understanding, reduces interpersonal conflicts, and strengthens family connections. Similarly, constructive communication styles, including expressiveness, clarity, and emotional openness, contributed significantly to improved intergenerational relationships, whereas aggressive communication patterns were associated with weaker relationship quality. The study further revealed generational differences, with Millennials reporting comparatively higher intergenerational relationship quality than Generation Z, suggesting that developmental stage and changing social experiences may influence family interactions. Additionally, age-related differences indicated that older participants tended to demonstrate stronger emotional closeness, interaction, and supportive exchanges with family members. Overall, the findings highlight that maintaining positive communication and developing empathetic abilities are essential for bridging generational differences and promoting stronger family relationships within the Pakistani cultural context. The study provides valuable insights for families, educators, and mental health professionals by emphasizing the importance of empathy-based communication strategies to enhance understanding, respect, and emotional connection between younger and older generations. Future research may further explore additional cultural, technological, and psychological factors that shape intergenerational relationships in Pakistan.

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