

Evaluating the outcomes of intergenerational shared experiences in learning environments: Perspectives from HE

(Higher Education) students

Aims:

- To investigate and evaluate barriers, enablers, and outcomes of intergenerational activities from HE students
- To explore the implications of intergenerational work on the student experience.
- To help develop future interventions that aim to improve engagement, widen participation, and lead to beneficial outcomes for those involved in intergenerational activities.

Introduction

Previous work has found that intergenerational learning activities are prevalent in community settings such as care homes and schools, but that they are not typically evaluated empirically (De Bellis, Gregoric & Grant, 2022).

Recent studies have shown that intergenerational programs provide benefits to both the older and younger generations (Pstross et al 2017). These include (but not limited to):

- An enhanced learning experience for the younger generation
- Opportunities for the older generations to engage in the community

However, despite the reported benefits, research shows how there is a lack of empirical studies to reliably show the benefits of intergenerational programmes and activities (Lee et al 2019).

Methods

Design: 1-2-1 recorded online semi-structured interviews to gather insight into the impact of intergenerational experiences on students.

Sampling: Opportunity and Snowballing techniques (encouraging participants to share the study with people they know and have similar experience).

Materials:

We used collaborate and a semi-structured interview schedule.

Inclusion Criteria:

Participants were over the age of 18 who were currently studying in Higher education with some experience with intergenerational activities (students that have participated in at least 1 activity).

Procedure:

Advertisement of the Project (alongside information sheet and consent form) was distributed via online including social media.

Once Participants were recruited and briefed, semi-structured interviews were conducted online via a secure collaborate room. Before recording, Participants were briefed just before the interview and were reminded that they could withdraw their data within 2 weeks of the interview.

The recordings of the interview were then transcribed. Once the transcriptions for the interviews were completed, thematic analysis was conducted.

Results

Outcomes of intergenerational activities were reported to be mutually beneficial with the older generations benefitting from socialising, whilst both generations learning new skills and attitudes. For example, showing the participants how to be "patient" and how "easy it is not to be inclusive", referring to making sure everyone's voice has a chance to be heard.

However, the analysis indicated that there is a lack of intergenerational activities. The few activities at university seemed to be more focused towards the younger generations. They also were reported to be campus based and insufficient advertisements.

Barriers included some forms of "closed culture", where people tend to mingle with others within their own generation. The older generations were reported to be a bit more "arrogant" and "resistive to try new things" whilst the younger generations have the tendency to be quite "obnoxious" when they are together.

Facilitators included being local to where the intergenerational activities were taking place, both for the older and younger generations. Achieving a common goal and feeling a part of the community was also reported to help engage in these activities. The older generations patience and the younger generations' willingness to try new things also helped maintain engagement.

Conclusion

From the Thematic analysis, it was revealed that the outcomes of intergenerational activities were mostly positive, with some conflicts. However, there seems to be fundamental lack of intergenerational activities and a need for activities to be more inclusive towards older/ more mature students, such as the location and time of the activities and the nature of them. There also appears to be a need for more effective advertising.

References

De Bellis, A., Gregoric, C., & Grant, J. (2022). Intergenerational activities involving adolescents and residents of aged care facilities: A scoping review. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15330730.2022.2113113>

Lee et al (2019). Documented outcomes for older adults in intergenerational programming: A scoping review. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 18(2), 113–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15330730.2019.1673274>

Pstross et al (2016). The Benefits of Intergenerational Learning in Higher Education: Lessons Learned from Two Age Friendly University Programs. *Innov High Educ* 42, 157–171 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-016-9171-z>

