

The aim of the retrospective research was to discover how participation by children and older people in an intergenerational doctoral research project (2011-2015), in five schools in the West of Ireland, may have contributed to their wellbeing.

METHODS

In March 2021, an invitation was extended to hear from the children (now 17yrs+) and older people (now 70yrs+), through qualitative data collection and analysis, how Intergenerational Learning (IL) may have developed their **sense of wellbeing**.

The 'sandwich generation women' were also included as a sample group in the focus group research. The sandwich generation comprised of mothers of the young people, and adult daughters of the older people.

We discussed protective factors that can lead to a sense of wellbeing, focusing on the evidence-informed actions to support health and wellbeing, promoted by the Health Service Executive and Mental Health, Ireland:

Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, Give.

FINDINGS

Findings demonstrate that IL, migrated outside the boundary of the schools and contributed to the development of **individual, relational and community wellbeing**.

Nine findings, in the shape of protective factors for nurturing wellbeing emerged. In addition the group gained a developed sense of empathetic understanding for the age-other, leading to **intergenerational solidarity**.

2022 marks the tenth anniversary of the European initiative to support solidarity between generations.



It is understood in this context as an 'expression of trust between members of the same or different generations' (Klimczuk, 2022).

DISCUSSION

The values of **justice, equality, fairness, solidarity and respect for differences** are important in nurturing wellbeing (Department of Education and Science, 2018). With a focus on solidarity, enhancing intergenerational solidarity, according to the European Map for Intergenerational Learning is one way of addressing the demographic change across Europe.

The demographic change of an ageing society brings challenges; however, the participants spoke about the **positive changes** they experience in themselves and see in others, as a result of IL. Young people have learned about the significance of **respect for others**. Older people **feel valued** and respected, when acknowledged in the community.

In the context of the COVID Pandemic, participants voiced a greater importance for forging connections, acknowledging older people as **role models for resilience**, while younger and older appreciated how they may have played a role in **nurturing each other's wellbeing**.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In the 2021 WHO Global Report on Ageism, it states interventions that **combine intergenerational contact with education**, have a proven track record of changing prejudicial attitudes compared to those that focus on intergenerational contact alone, and are the most effective interventions at **eliminating ageism**.



Responsibility towards self and others, with respect to wellbeing is timely. In Ireland, at present the **Primary School Curriculum** is being redeveloped, and is due for publication in 2023.

The new curriculum will replace the 20-year-old subject areas and instead focus on key competency areas. Three of these being (NCCA, 2020): **Fostering Wellbeing, Being an Active Citizen, Learning to be a Learner**. Evidence-informed research highlights that participation in intergenerational learning in schools has the potential to activate children's civic engagement (Hanmore-Cawley, Scharf, 2016). This retrospective study 6 years later, further corroborates these findings.

Although the public consultation on the draft curriculum framework was put on hold because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, **new learning from the Pandemic** is now being considered, specifically in wellbeing. Education policy and practice that takes note of intergenerational learning collaborations can actively connect people of all ages in lifelong learning, while reciprocally enhancing wellbeing and promoting positive change.

References

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