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Intergenerational conflict and conflict resolution strategies

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Abstract
Objective: This study examines the types and causes of intergenerational conflict and identify effective strategies for its resolution within family settings.
Background: Intergenerational conflict has become increasingly significant as families navigate rapid societal changes, including shifts in cultural values, technological advancements, and evolving social norms. These tensions often affect family cohesion, communication, and overall well-being, particularly in multigenerational households.
Methods: This study utilized a descriptive survey design. Participants included 300 individuals (150 older adults aged 60+, 150 younger adults aged 18-30) from multigenerational households in urban and suburban regions of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire and data were analyzed using SPSS software.
Results: The findings of the study revealed that the types of intergenerational conflict are: value-based conflicts, communication style conflicts, technological disparities, workplace conflicts among others. The causes of intergenerational conflict include: value differences and socialization, communication gaps and technological change, differences in work ethic and career expectations among others. The conflict resolution strategies across generational lines comprise: active listening and empathic communication, intergenerational dialogue programs, family systems therapy and intergenerational counseling among others.
Conclusion: Intergenerational conflict arises from differing values, communication styles, and life experiences across age groups, but it also presents opportunities for mutual growth and understanding. By embracing empathetic dialogue and inclusive strategies, individuals and institutions can transform generational tensions into collaborative and constructive relationships.

Keywords: Intergenerational conflict, conflict resolution, family dynamics, communication styles

1. Introduction
Conflict is an inherent and pervasive element of human interaction. It arises when individuals or groups perceive incompatibilities in goals, interests, values, or beliefs, often resulting in tension, opposition, or struggle (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2018) [9]. Far from being an anomaly, conflict is a normal and often necessary part of social life. It can manifest across interpersonal, group, organizational, and societal levels, influencing relationships, decision-making processes, and institutional structures. While conflict is often associated with undesirable outcomes such as stress, hostility, or violence, it can also lead to growth, innovation, and stronger relationships when managed fruitfully. At its core, Jehn (2015) [21] posited that conflict is a dynamic process characterized by the interplay of opposing forces. This process can be triggered by a variety of factors, including competition for limited resources, differences in communication styles, incompatible goals, role ambiguity, and power imbalances. In both personal and professional settings, conflict may emerge over tangible issues, such as money or responsibilities, or intangible concerns like respect, recognition, or cultural identity. The intensity and impact of conflict depend on several variables, including the nature of the relationship, the context in which the conflict occurs, and the strategies employed to address it.
The study of conflict spans multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communication studies, political science, and organizational behavior. Each field offers unique insights into the causes, manifestations, and consequences of conflict. Psychological

approaches often emphasize cognitive and emotional processes, such as perception, attribution, and emotion regulation (Barki & Hartwick, 2024) [1]. Sociological perspectives focus on structural inequalities, power dynamics, and the influence of social norms and institutions. Communication scholars examine how language, messaging, and discourse shape conflict interactions, while organizational theorists explore how conflict affects team dynamics, leadership, and performance. Despite its universality, conflict is not experienced or managed uniformly across cultures or generations. Cultural norms and values play a significant role in shaping conflict behaviors and expectations (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2021) [38]. For example, collectivist cultures may prioritize harmony and indirect communication, while individualist cultures might encourage assertiveness and direct expression. Similarly, generational differences in values, communication preferences, and worldviews can contribute to misunderstandings and friction, particularly in intergenerational relationships within families and organizations.

Conflict between generations is a persistent and increasingly visible phenomenon in contemporary society. Intergenerational conflict refers to discord that arises between members of different age cohorts-often between younger and older generations-due to divergent values, expectations, communication styles, and life experiences (North & Fiske, 2019) [29]. These tensions are not new; they are rooted in historical and cultural narratives around social change, authority, and the shifting roles of age groups. However, the stride of technological innovation, demographic shifts, and evolving cultural norms have amplified these conflicts in the 21st century, making them a grave area of inquiry across disciplines such as family studies, sociology, psychology, and organizational behavior.

At its core, intergenerational conflict is rooted in value discrepancies and role expectations between age groups. Older adults may emphasize tradition, stability, and hierarchy, while younger individuals may prioritize innovation, flexibility, and egalitarianism (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2022) [3]. These conflicting priorities can lead to misunderstandings, reduced cooperation, and nervous relationships in both familial and institutional contexts. In families, intergenerational tensions often revolve around parenting decisions, caregiving responsibilities, financial dependency, and lifestyle choices. In the workplace, such conflict often surfaces in discrepancies over work ethic, feedback preferences, and technology use. However, Fisher, Ury, & Patton (2021) [14] stated that effective conflict resolution involves identifying the root causes of disagreement, fostering open communication, encouraging empathy, and finding mutually acceptable solutions. The strategies range from informal dialogue and negotiation to formal mediation, arbitration, or legal intervention, depending on the severity and complexity of the conflict.

1.1 Background of the Study

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, arising in diverse contexts ranging from interpersonal relationships and organizational structures to universal political arenas. Although commonly viewed as an undesirable phenomenon associated with tension and discord, conflict can also foster growth, transformation, and improved understanding when approached constructively. One of the most influential early definitions of conflict comes from Morton Deutsch, who described conflict as "a situation in which the incompatible activities of different individuals or groups interfere with or obstruct one another" (Deutsch, 2017, p. 10) [10]. This conceptualization is rooted in the idea of goal incompatibility and highlights the interactive nature of conflict. For Deutsch, conflict is not merely about disagreement but about active interference that prevents goal attainment.

Building on the work of Georg Simmel, Coser (2016) [8] emphasized the social functions of conflict. He defined it as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals" (Coser, 2016, p. 8) [8]. Coser definition is particularly notable for situating conflict within the broader structural and systemic dynamics of society. Rather than viewing conflict as pathological, Coser framed it as an integral mechanism of social change and cohesion.

From a psychological standpoint, conflict occurs both internally and externally. Intrapersonal conflict arises when an individual experiences contradictory desires, values, or emotions. Lewin (2017) [25] identified various types of internal conflict, such as approach-approach, avoidance-avoidance, and approach-avoidance conflicts. These internal struggles are fundamental to understanding how humans make decisions and prioritize goals. Interpersonal conflict, by contrast, involves external parties and is frequently driven by perceptions of threat, injustice, or competition.

In the organizational context, conflict is often defined functionally, emphasizing its role in shaping group performance and decision-making. Robbins and Judge (2019) [35] define conflict as "a process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about" (p. 434). This definition underscores the role of perception and subjectivity in conflict. The implication is that conflict may exist even in the absence of tangible harm, so long as it is perceived. Organizational conflict is typically categorized into three types: task conflict (relating to content and goals of the work), relationship conflict (stemming from interpersonal incompatibilities), and process conflict (concerned with logistics and delegation) (Jehn, 2015) [21]. Importantly, not all conflict is destructive. Moderate levels of task conflict have been shown to enhance creativity and decision-making, while excessive relationship conflict tends to impair group cohesion and productivity.

Sociologists often examine conflict through macro-level structures, focusing on inequality, class struggle, and systemic tensions. Karl Marx's theory of class conflict argues that societal structures are fundamentally conflictual due to inherent inequalities in wealth and power (Marx & Engels, 1848/1978) [27]. For Marx, conflict is an expression of the antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and it is through conflict that revolutionary change is possible. In modern sociology, conflict is seen as both a social condition and a dynamic process. All social interactions are integrally conflictual, as individuals and groups contend for scarce resources and status. Conflict is not only unavoidable but also central to the functioning of societies.

In the realm of political science and international relations, conflict is defined in terms of discordant interests among sovereign actors, often involving power, ideology, or territory. Burton (2019) [6] introduced the concept of "protracted social conflict" to describe long-standing, identity-based disputes that resist resolution through traditional diplomatic channels. He argued that deep-rooted human needs-such as recognition, security, and identity-must be addressed to resolve such conflicts. Waltz (2019) [41]

opined that international conflict may be manifest in wars, disputes, or diplomatic standoffs. The realist school views international conflict as the result of the anarchic structure of the international system, where states must rely on self-help to ensure survival. In contrast, liberal and constructivist scholars emphasize the roles of institutions, interdependence, and social norms in mitigating conflict.

Culture plays a significant role in shaping how conflict is understood and managed. Ting-Toomey (2018) [37] proposed the face-negotiation theory, which suggests that cultural values influence conflict communication styles. In collectivist societies, for instance, individuals may prioritize harmony and face-saving, leading to indirect or avoidance-based conflict strategies. In individualist cultures, assertiveness and direct confrontation may be more acceptable. Hofstede (2015) [18] identified key cultural dimensions-such as individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance-that inform conflict behavior. For example, cultures high in power distance may discourage subordinates from challenging authority, which can suppress open conflict but also delay resolution.

Intergenerational conflict occurs when individuals from different age cohorts experience value clashes, communication gaps, or incompatible expectations. Bengtson *et al*. (2022) [3] described intergenerational conflict as a natural byproduct of social change and generational succession. Such conflict often manifests in families (e.g., caregiving responsibilities) or workplaces (e.g., differences in technology use and work ethics). This form of conflict is often embedded in broader social narratives about aging, authority, and innovation. For example, younger generations may view older allies as resistant to change, while elders may perceive youth as disrespectful or entitled. Understanding these dynamics is vital for developing effective conflict resolution strategies.

Conflict resolution refers to the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. Central to effective conflict resolution are the strategies individuals and groups employ to address disagreements. These strategies vary in approach, goals, and effectiveness depending on the nature of the conflict and the cultural, psychological, or organizational context in which it arises (Rahim, 2020) [32]. Conflict resolution strategies are deliberate techniques or behaviors used by individuals or groups to manage, mitigate, or resolve disagreements. Thomas and Kilmann (2014) [36] defined these strategies based on two dimensions: assertiveness (the extent to which one attempts to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (the extent to which one attempts to satisfy the concerns of others). Conflict resolution strategies may be grouped into broad categories based on approach and context: Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration, Collaborative Problem-Solving and Avoidance.

Negotiation is a direct, dialogical process wherein two or more parties attempt to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. It can be distributive (win-lose) or integrative (win-win). Integrative negotiation emphasizes collaborative strategies and creative problem-solving (Lewicki, Barry, & Saunders, 2015) [24]. Mediation involves a neutral third party who facilitates dialogue and assists parties in reaching a voluntary agreement. Mediators do not impose decisions but help parties explore options and clarify issues. Mediation is widely used in family, community, and workplace disputes (Moore, 2014) [28]. In arbitration, a neutral third party listens to both sides and makes a binding decision. It is more formal than mediation and resembles a court proceeding. Arbitration is common in labor and commercial disputes (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2016) [11].

Collaborative Problem-Solving approach focuses on joint effort to find innovative, mutually beneficial solutions. It includes techniques such as brainstorming, consensus building, and reframing. It is particularly effective in team settings and inter organizational conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 2014) [42]. Avoidance is a passive strategy that seeks to evade rather than confront the conflict. It may be appropriate for trivial issues or when emotions are too intense for productive engagement, but chronic avoidance can lead to escalation (Rahim, 2020) [32].

Conflict resolution strategies are diverse, context-dependent, and influenced by psychological, cultural, and relational factors. Effective conflict management does not rely on a single strategy but rather on the thoughtful selection of approaches that align with the nature of the conflict, the goals of the parties involved, and the social or organizational context. Understanding these strategies-and the theories underpinning them-enhances individuals' and institutions' capacity to transform conflict into an opportunity for growth, collaboration, and improved communication.

1.2 Problem Statement: In today's rapidly evolving social, economic, and cultural landscapes, intergenerational conflict has become an increasingly prevalent issue across families, workplaces, and communities. These conflicts often arise due to divergent values, communication styles, life experiences, and expectations between older and younger generations. The generational gap is further widened by technological advancements, shifting cultural norms, and differing attitudes toward work, authority, and relationships (Twenge, 2020) [39]. As these generational disparities intensify, the potential for misunderstandings and conflict escalates, thereby challenging social cohesion and productivity, particularly in multigenerational households and organizations.

Despite the evident rise in intergenerational tension, there remains a gap in both academic research and practical frameworks focused specifically on resolving such conflicts. Most existing literature on conflict resolution tends to adopt a generalized approach, often overlooking the unique dynamics of age-based conflict and the sociocultural underpinnings that shape generational perspectives (Cennamo & Gardner, 2018) [7]. Moreover, younger and older individuals may favor different conflict resolution strategies, influenced by age-related emotional regulation, power hierarchies, and cultural conditioning. This complexity necessitates an exploration of resolution methods tailored to intergenerational interactions.

The absence of targeted strategies to address intergenerational conflict can lead to adverse outcomes such as weakened familial bonds, workplace disengagement, and reduced intergenerational collaboration. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine the nature of intergenerational conflict, identify the factors contributing to its emergence, and assess effective conflict resolution strategies that bridge the generational divide. This research seeks to fill that gap by providing empirical and theoretical insights into how intergenerational conflict manifests and how it can be effectively managed or resolved through appropriate strategies.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the types of intergenerational conflict
2. To ascertain the causes of intergenerational conflict
3. To analyze conflict resolution strategies across generational lines

1.4 Significance of the Study: Understanding intergenerational conflict and the strategies used to resolve it is vital for promoting social harmony, enhancing interpersonal relationships, and improving organizational effectiveness. As societies become increasingly diverse in age composition-due to longer life expectancies, delayed retirement, and the coexistence of multiple generations in both households and workplaces-the potential for generational tensions is heightened. This study addresses a critical gap by examining how intergenerational conflict arises and what strategies are most effective for managing such tensions.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to the broader field of conflict resolution by expanding existing frameworks to account for generational dynamics. While many conflict resolution models (e.g., the Thomas-Kilmann Model or the Dual Concern Theory) offer insights into interpersonal conflict, few are specifically tailored to age-related tensions and their cultural, psychological, and communicative roots (Rahim, 2021; Thomas & Kilmann, 2014) [33, 36]. By integrating theories from gerontology, psychology, and communication studies, this research offers a multidisciplinary perspective on conflict resolution across age groups.

The study also has practical implications for a variety of social settings: families, workplaces, education and community programs, demographic shifts and intergenerational cooperation in aging societies

In families, it can guide interventions that support healthier relationships between parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren by fostering empathy and intergenerational understanding.

In workplaces, the findings can inform human resource policies and managerial practices aimed at reducing generational friction and improving collaboration among Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.

In education and community programs, the study can support the development of intergenerational learning environments and conflict resolution training tailored to age-diverse populations.

Furthermore, this research is significant in the context of demographic shifts and the increasing importance of intergenerational cooperation in aging societies. Effective management of intergenerational conflict can enhance civic engagement, community cohesion, and sustainable social development.

Ultimately, the insights generated from this study can help bridge the generational divide by promoting mutual respect, improving communication, and fostering more inclusive environments where all age groups can thrive.

2. Literature Review: Intergenerational conflict is commonly defined as tension or disagreement between individuals from different age cohorts, typically resulting from value differences, communication gaps, and lifestyle disparities (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2022) [3]. It is most often observed in familial relationships (e.g., parent-child or grandparent-grandchild), organizational settings (e.g., cross-generational coworkers), and community interactions where generational expectations and social norms differ. The phenomenon is aggravated by rapid societal changes, including digital transformation, economic instability, and evolving gender and family roles.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Several theoretical frameworks contribute to the understanding of intergenerational conflict. They are family system theory, social exchange theory and Life course theory.

Family Systems Theory

Family System Theory was developed primarily by Murray Bowen in 1978. Family Systems Theory posits that families are dynamic systems where changes in one part affect the entire unit. Intergenerational conflict can thus be seen as a response to shifts in roles, expectations, or life transitions within the family system. Family Systems Theory is a psychological and therapeutic framework that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions within it. The theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from their family, because families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals (Bowen, 1978) [5].

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was originally proposed by George C. Homans, a sociologist, in his 1958. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a theoretical framework used to understand social behavior in terms of an exchange process, where individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs in relationships. Rooted in both psychology and sociology, SET assumes that human interactions are driven by rational choices and evaluations of personal gain. The theory suggests that conflict arises when perceived contributions and rewards among family members become imbalanced (Homans, 1958) [19]. For instance, aging parents who rely on their adult children for support may feel a loss of autonomy, while the younger generation may feel overburdened or unacknowledged.

Life Course Theory

Life Course Theory was developed in the 1960s by sociologists Glen Elder and Alva Myrdal. Life course theory (also called the Life Course Perspective) is a multidisciplinary framework that examines how individual lives are shaped by the timing, sequence, and context of life events across the lifespan. It emphasizes that development is a lifelong process influenced by social, historical, and cultural contexts. Life Course Theory provides a longitudinal perspective, emphasizing how individuals' experiences across different life stages shape their expectations and behaviors (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2023) [12]. Generational differences in life stage, timing, and historical context can influence how individuals perceive and handle conflict.

2.2 Types of intergenerational conflict

Intergenerational conflict has gained increasing attention as societies become more demographically diverse and age-integrated. Differences in values, behaviors, communication styles, and life experiences often lead to misunderstandings and tensions between generations. These conflicts are prevalent in families, educational institutions, workplaces, and broader social contexts (Bengtson, 2021) [2]. Intergenerational conflicts occur when individuals from different age cohorts experience friction due to divergent values, behaviors, beliefs, and expectations (Lyons & Kuron, 2014) [26]. As societies evolve, the contrast between traditional and contemporary worldviews often becomes more pronounced, resulting in tension across generations. This paper explores ten distinct types of intergenerational conflicts, offering detailed explanations and real-life contexts, to promote understanding and management of such disputes.

Value-Based Conflicts
One of the most protuberant intergenerational conflicts arises from differing core values. Older generations often emphasize discipline, duty, and community, while younger generations may prioritize self-expression, autonomy, and inclusivity. This value gap can manifest in debates over gender roles, marriage norms, and political ideologies.

Communication Style Conflicts
Each generation has its favorite communication style. Baby Boomers may favor formal communication, whereas Millennials and Gen Z prefer informal, digital communication. Misunderstandings can occur when one group perceives another's style as impolite or futile.

Technological Disparities
Technological advancements have broadened the generational gap. Younger individuals adopt new technologies swiftly, while older generations may struggle with acclimatizing. This can cause frustration in families and workplaces, where technology plays a central role.

Workplace Conflicts: In the workplace, intergenerational conflicts stem from divergent views on work ethic, authority, and job expectations. For example, Gen X may value independence, Baby Boomers may emphasize loyalty, and Millennials might seek purpose and flexibility.

Parenting and Family Roles
Conflicts often arise in families regarding parenting methods. Grandparents might advocate for traditional child-rearing methods, while younger parents may embrace modern, psychology-driven approaches. Disagreements on discipline, diet, and education can lead to familial tension.

Economic and Financial Expectations
Economic pressures create conflict, especially when older generations perceive younger ones as entitled or financially reckless. Conversely, younger people may feel laden by student debt and stagnant wages, criticizing older generations for economic inequities.

Cultural and Acculturation Differences
In immigrant families, children integrate into the host culture more quickly than their parents, resulting in a cultural divide. Parents may uphold traditional customs, while children adopt the dominant culture's values, leading to misunderstandings and identity struggles.

Generational Stereotyping
Negative stereotypes-such as "lazy Millennials" or "stubborn Boomers"-fuel conflict. These broad generalizations hamper cooperation and mutual respect. Combating stereotypes requires open dialogue and appreciation for each generation's strengths.

Lifestyle and Leisure Preferences
Different generations often have discrete preferences for spending leisure time, which can lead to tension in both family and social settings. For instance, younger generations might prefer social media, video games, or experiential travel, while older generations might favor traditional hobbies like reading or gardening. These differences can lead to feelings of exclusion or misunderstanding.

Political and Social Beliefs: Generational divides are stark in political arenas. Older adults may favor conservative ideologies, while younger individuals lean liberal. Clashes often occur around issues like climate change, healthcare, and social justice. Understanding the roots and types of intergenerational conflicts is vital for promoting dialogue and harmony. By recognizing each generation's inimitable standpoints and experiences, society can bridge divides and foster collaboration.

2.3 Causes of intergenerational conflict
Intergenerational conflict refers to the tension and discord that arises between individuals of different age groups, particularly between the younger and older generations. These conflicts often stem from differences in values, beliefs, life experiences, expectations, and communication styles. As societies become more complex and diverse, such conflicts have become increasingly prominent in families, workplaces, and broader social contexts. This paper explores the major causes of intergenerational conflict.

Value Differences and Socialization
One of the primary causes of intergenerational conflict is the difference in values between older and younger generations. Older generations often emphasize traditional values such as respect for authority, loyalty, and conformity, whereas younger generations tend to prioritize independence, self-expression, and social equality (Inglehart & Baker, 2020) [20]. These differing value orientations are rooted in the unique social and historical contexts in which each generation was raised.

Communication Gaps and Technological Change
Rapid technological advancements have drastically altered the ways in which different generations communicate. Older generations, who may not be as fluent in digital technologies, often struggle to understand or keep up with the digital fluency of younger individuals. This can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and even a sense of alienation. Moreover, the preference for communication platforms differs markedly between generations. While older adults may favor face-to-face or telephone conversations, younger individuals often prefer texting, social media, and video calls (Pew Research Center, 2021). These differences can create a perception that the other group is either too formal or too impersonal, resulting in friction.

Generational Stereotypes and Prejudices
Stereotyping plays a significant role in perpetuating intergenerational conflict. Ageist attitudes, whether directed toward older adults (e.g., viewing them as rigid or technologically inept) or younger people (e.g., labeling them as lazy or entitled), foster mutual resentment and hinder constructive dialogue (North & Fiske, 2019) [29]. These stereotypes are not only socially divisive but also self-reinforcing, as individuals often behave in ways that confirm the expectations placed upon them.

Economic Inequality and Resource Competition
Economic disparities between generations are another key source of conflict. The older generation may be perceived as hoarding resources such as wealth, housing, or political power, while younger generations struggle with job insecurity, student debt, and unaffordable housing. This perceived inequity fuels antipathy and feelings of unfairness.

Differences in Work Ethic and Career Expectations
Workplace conflicts between generations often arise due to differing attitudes toward work, loyalty, and career progression. Older generations might value job stability, hierarchical advancement, and long-term commitment to a single employer. In contrast, younger generations often prioritize work-life balance, flexible schedules, and meaningful or purpose-driven work (Twenge & Campbell, 2022) [40]. These divergent attitudes can lead to mutual frustration. Employers may see younger workers as lacking discipline, while younger employees may view older colleagues as resistant to change or innovation. When such tensions are not adequately addressed, they can undermine workplace morale and productivity.

Parenting and Child-Rearing Practices
Conflicts frequently occur in families over parenting styles, especially when grandparents and parents disagree on how children should be raised. Older generations may advocate for strict discipline and traditional routines, whereas younger parents often adopt more permissive or psychologically-informed approaches (Bornstein, 2018) [4]. These differences can become especially pronounced in multigenerational households, where grandparents may feel their authority is being undermined, while parents may feel criticized or judged.

Identity and Cultural Shifts
Younger generations often challenge cultural norms around gender identity, sexuality, race, and religion, which can lead to significant tension with older generations who may hold more conservative views (Grossman, 2016) [16]. Such cultural shifts can feel threatening to those whose identities and worldviews are grounded in traditional paradigms. This is particularly evident in societies undergoing rapid social transformation, where traditional values are questioned in the pursuit of inclusivity and social justice. The resulting "culture wars" are often intergenerational in nature, reflecting deeper apprehensions about change, identity, and belonging.

Lack of Intergenerational Contact and Empathy
Physical and social separation between generations can lessen opportunities for mutual understanding. In modern societies, nuclear family structures, urban migration, and age-specific institutions often limit sustained contact between age groups. This segregation fosters ignorance and reduces empathy.

Generational Trauma and Historical Events
Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of traumatic experiences from one generation to the next, often through behaviors, attitudes, and family dynamics. In families or communities affected by war, displacement, or systemic discrimination, unresolved trauma can contribute to misunderstandings and emotional distancing between generations (Kellermann, 2021) [23]. Younger generations may reject the coping mechanisms or silence of their elders, leading to clashes over how to deal with difficult legacies. At the same time, older individuals may perceive the younger generation as disrespectful or dismissive of their sacrifices, further intensifying conflict.

Political and Ideological Divides
Finally, political divergence is increasingly mapped onto generational lines. Older adults often lean toward conservative ideologies, while younger generations tend to support progressive causes. These ideological divides manifest in disagreements over policies related to climate change, immigration, education, and social justice.
Intergenerational conflict is a complex phenomenon driven by differences in values, communication styles, economic realities, cultural identities, and political ideologies. While some level of generational tension is inevitable in any society, proactive efforts to foster mutual understanding, empathy, and cooperation can reduce the intensity and frequency of such conflicts. Recognizing and addressing the underlying causes is essential for building more inclusive and harmonious intergenerational relationships.

2.4 Conflict resolution strategies across generational lines
Intergenerational conflict, while common in families, workplaces, and societies at large, is not insurmountable. These conflicts often stem from differences in values, communication styles, social experiences, and expectations. As such, resolving intergenerational conflicts requires an understanding of the root causes and the application of appropriate strategies that consider the unique characteristics of each generation. This paper explores various conflict resolution strategies tailored to bridging generational divides.

Active Listening and Empathic Communication
One of the most effective strategies for resolving intergenerational conflict is the practice of **a**ctive listening-fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is being said. Older and younger generations often misconstrue each other due to communication gaps; thus, empathetic dialogue helps reduce tension and build trust. Empathic communication involves acknowledging the emotional experiences of others, even when one disagrees with their perspective. According to Gordon's (2023), Parent Effectiveness Training model, listening with empathy enhances relational harmony and minimizes defensiveness, a strategy that proves valuable in intergenerational families and caregiving settings.

Intergenerational Dialogue Programs
Structured intergenerational dialogue programs promote mutual understanding and reduce age-based stereotypes. These initiatives often bring people from different age groups together for meaningful conversations, encouraging the exchange of perspectives and the co-construction of shared meanings. Programs such as the Intergenerational Dialogue on Aging (IDA) have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing prejudice and fostering intergenerational solidarity (Kaplan, 2022) [22]. The dialogic process allows for the safe exploration of generational differences and builds a culture of mutual respect.

Mediation and Third-Party Facilitation
When intergenerational conflicts escalate, mediation-a form of facilitated negotiation involving a neutral third party-can help de-escalate tensions. In workplace or familial contexts, mediators can create a balanced environment where each party feels heard and validated (Bush & Folger, 2005) [44]. Generational conflict is often emotionally charged due to long-standing power dynamics or value clashes. Transformative mediation focuses not just on problem-solving, but on improving relationships through recognition and empowerment, making it a valuable tool in intergenerational disputes.

Cross-Generational Mentoring
Mentorship programs that pair older and younger individuals in reciprocal learning relationships can prevent or resolve intergenerational conflict by fostering mutual appreciation. While traditional mentoring flows from senior to junior, reverse mentoring-where younger people teach older counterparts new skills (often tech-related)-promotes equity and challenges ageist assumptions.

Value-Based Conflict Resolution
Values often underpin intergenerational conflicts, particularly in families. Value-based conflict resolution emphasizes identifying and discussing underlying values rather than just surface-level issues. According to Burton's (2019) human needs theory, unmet psychological needs like respect, identity, or autonomy are central to many conflicts. By focusing on these needs and reframing conflicts through a values lens, parties can shift from adversarial stances to collaborative problem-solving. For example, a grandparent and teenager arguing over curfew may ultimately be expressing needs for safety (grandparent) and autonomy (teenager).

Emotional regulation and conflict competence
Emotional self-regulation is essential in conflict resolution. Research shows that older adults tend to have higher levels of emotional regulation and conflict competence due to life experience and cognitive-emotional maturity. However, younger individuals often have stronger skills in digital communication and openness to feedback (Wilmot & Hocker, 2016) [43]. Training programs that teach conflict competence-the ability to manage disagreements constructively-are effective across generations. These programs often include training in de-escalation techniques, emotional awareness, and collaborative communication.

Family Systems therapy and intergenerational counseling
In family settings, especially where long-standing patterns of dysfunction exist, professional intervention through family therapy is often necessary. Bowen's family systems theory posits that family members are emotionally interconnected, and that unresolved issues in one generation can affect others (Bowen, 1978) [5]. Therapeutic models such as intergenerational family therapy help individuals explore generational patterns, develop differentiation of self, and establish new relational dynamics. This approach is especially effective in addressing deep-rooted conflicts involving identity, loyalty, and emotional cutoffs.

Shared Goals and Collaborative Decision-Making
Establishing shared goals can unify individuals across generations, shifting focus from differences to common interests. This strategy is particularly effective in workplace environments, where generational teams may clash over processes but align on desired outcomes. The interest-based negotiation model (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2020) [13] supports this strategy by encouraging participants to identify their underlying interests rather than rigid positions. By working collaboratively toward common objectives, generational teams can enhance cohesion and reduce conflict.

Cultural Competency and Diversity Training
Since intergenerational conflict often intersects with issues of race, gender, and cultural identity, incorporating cultural competency into conflict resolution training is critical. These programs encourage individuals to examine their biases and increase their sensitivity to diversity across age and cultural lines. Organizations that provide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training as part of their intergenerational workforce strategy report fewer misunderstandings and a more inclusive culture (Roberson, 2016) [34]. This approach is also applicable in educational institutions and community organizations.

Policy and institutional support for intergenerational harmony: At the macro level, supportive policies and institutional frameworks can reduce structural sources of intergenerational conflict. For example, programs that integrate older adults into schools or youth mentorship roles not only enrich learning environments but also improve social cohesion (Newman & Hatton-Yeo, 2018) [17]. Similarly, workplace policies promoting age diversity, flexible work arrangements, and anti-discrimination protections contribute to a climate where generational differences are respected and managed constructively. Without institutional support, even the best interpersonal strategies may fall short.
Resolving intergenerational conflict requires a multifaceted approach that recognizes the unique experiences and expectations of each generation. Strategies such as active listening, mediation, intergenerational dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving serve as vital tools in bridging divides. Furthermore, structural interventions-such as policy reform, education, and cultural competency training-create environments conducive to generational harmony. With intentional effort and mutual respect, intergenerational conflict can be transformed into a source of growth, learning, and social integration.

3. Methodology
The design of the study was a descriptive survey. According to Nworgu (2015) [35] a descriptive survey design is a type of research design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of entire group. The use of this research design was considered appropriate because it will establish the opinions of the participants with respect to their perceptions on the intergenerational conflict and conflict resolution strategies.

3.1 Participants
A total of 300 participants were recruited using purposive and stratified sampling methods to ensure balanced representation across at least three generational cohorts: Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Millennials/Generation Y (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2012; ages 18+ only). Participants were recruited through community centers, social media platforms, and university outreach programs. The sample was diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. They included 300 individuals (150 older adults aged 60+ and 150 younger adults aged 18-30)

3.2 Instruments
The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled: "Intergenerational conflict and conflict resolution strategies Questionnaire" (ICCRSQ). The questionnaire has two sections; A and B. Section A contains information on personal data of the respondents, while Section B contains thirty items arranged in three clusters, A,

B and C. Cluster A of the questionnaire identified the types of intergenerational conflict. Cluster B of the questionnaire hinged on the causes of intergenerational conflict. Cluster C of the questionnaire focused on the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines. All the clusters have ten items each, all relating to the research question that guided the study. The response format for cluster A to D was based on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents indicated their level of agreement by ticking (√) on the rating scale. The scale weighed 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

3.3 Procedure
The questionnaire was administered to the participants (older adults and younger adults) by the researcher and five research assistants. The five research assistants were properly acquainted by the researcher on how to embark on the exercise. They were acquainted on how to administer and retrieve the questionnaires to enable them get familiar with the modalities for administering the instrument appropriately. The researcher acquainted them with the purpose of the study, and also make explanations to them on the items in the clusters on each research question. It was necessary to use research assistants to make sure that the actual respondents for whom the instrument was meant for are indeed those who completed the instrument. Also, they helped to make clarifications to the students on the items whenever the need arises. The instruments were retrieved on the spot.

3.4 Data Analysis
Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the three research questions. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. The researcher used the values attached to the four-point scale to compute the mean scores for the items of the questionnaire. A mean score of 3.50 - 4.00 was accepted as strongly agree, 2.50 - 3.49 agree, 1.50 - 2.49 disagree and 0.50 - 1.49 strongly disagree. Data collected from the respondents was arranged, coded, and analyzed at 0.05 alpha level of significance through the application of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

4. Results
This section presents the results of the analysis of data obtained for the study in relation to the research questions that guided the study. The research questions are reproduced and related tables of data are presented.

Research question one
What are the types of intergenerational conflict?

Table 1: mean responses on the types of intergenerational conflict

S.No	Items	older adults (n = 150)			younger adults (n = 150)		
		X	SD	REM	X	SD	REM
1	Value-based conflicts	2.76	0.94	A	3.14	1.00	A
2	Communication style conflicts.	3.17	0.84	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	Technological disparities	3.20	0.74	A	3.30	0.89	A
4	Workplace conflicts	3.12	0.87	A	3.28	0.93	A
5	Parenting and family roles	3.15	0.84	A	3.34	0.81	A
6	Economic and financial expectations.	2.23	0.72	D	2.26	0.96	D
7	Generational stereotyping	2.28	1.14	D	2.21	0.99	D
8	Cultural and acculturation differences	3.28	0.73	A	3.20	0.97	A
9	Lifestyle and leisure preferences	3.22	0.71	A	3.34	0.81	A
10	Political and social beliefs	3.23	0.75	A	3.42	0.77	A

KEY: X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, REM = Remark

Table 1 shows the mean responses and standard deviations of the responses on the types of intergenerational conflict. Table 1 above shows that since the mean responses of items 6 and 7 are below the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents disagree with them as the types of intergenerational conflict, while others with mean responses above 2.50 (criterion mean), indicate that respondents agree with the items as the types of intergenerational conflict. The standard deviations of the items range from 0.71 to 1.14 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses.

Research Question Two
What are the causes of intergenerational conflict?

Table 2: Mean responses on the causes of intergenerational conflict

S.No	Items	older adults (n = 150)			younger adults (n = 150)		
		X	SD	REM	X	SD	REM
1	Value differences and socialization	2.76	0.94	A	3.14	1.00	A
2	Communication gaps and technological change	3.17	0.84	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	Differences in work ethic and career expectations	3.20	0.74	A	3.30	0.89	A
4	Economic inequality and resource competition	3.12	0.87	A	3.28	0.93	A
5	Generational stereotypes and prejudices	2.17	0.77	DA	2.38	0.84	DA
6	Lack of intergenerational contact and empathy	2.45	0.63	DA	2.14	0.73	DA
7	Identity and cultural shifts	3.23	1.11	A	3.19	0.84	A
8	Parenting and child-rearing practices	3.31	0.74	A	3.14	0.95	A
9	Generational trauma and historical events	3.16	0.76	A	3.26	0.79	A
10	Political and ideological divides	3.30	0.77	A	3.31	0.82	A

KEY: X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, REM = Remark

Table 2 shows the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on the causes of intergenerational conflict. The analysis on Table 2 shows that since the mean responses of items 5 and 6 are below the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents disagree with them as the causes of intergenerational conflict, while others with mean responses above 2.50 (criterion mean), indicate that respondents agree with them as the causes of intergenerational conflict. The standard deviation of the items ranged from 0.63 to 1.08 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their response.

Research Question Three

What are the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines?

Table 3: mean response on the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines

S.No	Items	older adults (n = 150)			younger adults (n = 150)		
		X	SD	REM	X	SD	REM
1	Active listening and empathic communication	2.72	0.92	A	3.09	0.98	A
2	Intergenerational dialogue programs	3.14	0.83	A	2.81	1.08	A
3	Mediation and third-party facilitation	3.17	0.73	A	3.25	0.88	A
4	Cross-generational mentoring	3.09	0.86	A	3.23	0.92	A
5	Value-based conflict resolution	2.72	0.92	A	3.09	0.98	A
6	Emotional regulation and conflict competence	3.14	0.83	A	2.81	1.08	A
7	Family systems therapy and intergenerational counseling	3.20	1.10	A	3.19	0.84	A
8	Shared goals and collaborative decision-making	3.28	0.73	A	3.13	0.95	A
9	Cultural competency and diversity training	3.12	0.74	A	3.26	0.79	A
10	Policy and institutional support for intergenerational harmony	3.27	0.76	A	3.29	0.81	A

KEY: X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, REM = Remark

Table 3 shows the mean responses and standard deviations of the responses on the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines. The analysis on Table 3 shows that all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. This shows that the responses indicate that all the items are the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines. The standard deviation of the items ranges from 0.73 - 1.10, which indicates that the respondents were not too far from each other and from the mean in their responses.

5. Discussion of Findings

Types of Intergenerational Conflict

The findings of the study revealed that the types of intergenerational conflict are: value-based conflicts, communication style conflicts, technological disparities, workplace conflicts, cultural and acculturation differences, lifestyle and leisure preferences, political and social beliefs. These findings are in consonance with the statement credited to Bengtson (2021) [2], that differences in values, behaviors, communication styles, and life experiences often lead to misunderstandings and tensions between generations. These conflicts are prevalent in families, educational institutions, workplaces, and broader social contexts. The findings are also in line with the statement ascribed Lyons & Kuron (2014) [26], that intergenerational conflicts occur when individuals from different age cohorts experience friction due to divergent values, behaviors, beliefs, and expectations.

Causes of Intergenerational Conflict

The findings of the study revealed that the causes of intergenerational conflict include: value differences and socialization, communication gaps and technological change, differences in work ethic and career expectations, economic inequality and resource competition, identity and cultural shifts, parenting and child-rearing practices, generational trauma and historical events, political and ideological divides. These findings are in concord with the statement attributed to De Dreu & Gelfand (2018) [9], that conflict is an inherent and pervasive element of human interaction; it arises when individuals or groups perceive incompatibilities in goals, interests, values, or beliefs, often resulting in tension, opposition, or struggle. The findings are in accord with the assertion made by Jehn (2015) [21], that conflict is a dynamic process characterized by the interplay of opposing forces; this process can be triggered by a variety of factors, including competition for limited resources, differences in communication styles, incompatible goals, role ambiguity, and power imbalances. The findings are also in harmony with the statement posited by Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein (2022) [3], that intergenerational conflict is rooted in value discrepancies and role expectations between age groups; older adults may emphasize tradition, stability, and hierarchy, while younger individuals may prioritize innovation, flexibility, and egalitarianism.

Conflict Resolution Strategies across Generational Lines

The findings of the study revealed that the conflict resolution strategies across generational lines comprise: active listening and empathic communication, intergenerational dialogue programs, mediation and third-party facilitation, cross-generational mentoring, value-based conflict resolution, emotional regulation and conflict competence, family systems therapy and intergenerational counseling, shared goals and collaborative decision-making, cultural competency and diversity training, policy and institutional support for intergenerational harmony. These findings are in consonance with statement credited to Fisher, Ury and Patton (2021) [14] that effective conflict resolution involves identifying the root causes of disagreement, fostering open communication, encouraging empathy, and finding mutually acceptable solutions. The strategies range from informal dialogue and negotiation to formal mediation, arbitration, or legal intervention, depending on the severity and complexity of the conflict. The findings of the study are in line with the report of Bush and Folger (2005) [44], that when intergenerational conflicts escalate, mediation-a form of facilitated negotiation involving a neutral third party-can help de-escalate tensions. In workplace or familial contexts, mediators can create a balanced environment where each party feels heard and validated. The findings of the study are also in compliance with supposition of Newman and Hatton-Yeo (2018) [17] that at the macro level, supportive policies and institutional frameworks can reduce structural sources of intergenerational conflict. For example, programs that integrate older adults

into schools or youth mentorship roles not only enrich learning environments but also improve social cohesion.

6. Conclusion

The phenomenon of intergenerational conflict is neither new nor isolated; rather, it is a deeply rooted aspect of human interaction that manifests in diverse contexts including families, workplaces, communities, and broader societal systems. Intergenerational conflict is an enduring and complex social phenomenon entrenched in differing values, expectations, communication styles, and socio-cultural experiences among people of varying age groups. This article has examined the types and causes of intergenerational conflict, while also exploring evidence-based conflict resolution strategies that can mitigate its negative effects and transform generational differences into opportunities for growth, cooperation, and mutual enrichment. The central thrust of this article is the recognition that intergenerational conflict is not merely the result of chronological age differences, but is shaped by a complex interplay of values, communication styles, expectations, socio-cultural experiences, and psychological developmental stages. These generational distinctions, often exacerbated by rapidly changing social and technological environments, contribute to misunderstandings, tension, and even alienation between younger and older cohorts. Yet, it is precisely within this friction that potential for transformation and relational strengthening exists.

7. References

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