

A scoping review of Rogers' person-centred approach to identify constructs relevant to optimal intergenerational relationships

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Abstract

Optimal intergenerational relationships make important social contributions to age-inclusive communities and societies. Intergenerational relationships involve different cohorts of people across the life course. Existing theories look at intergenerational relationships from an intrapsychic experience, socio-cultural perspective, and/or in terms of outcomes, but do not adequately explain what occurs between interacting generational members to yield the experiences and outcomes. We identified Rogers' person-centred approach (PCA) as a useful framework for creating optimal relationships and accordingly this article aims to identify the constructs of the PCA in the context in which Rogers developed them and we applied them to intergenerational relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. We conducted a scoping review and sampled Rogers' original publications between January 1951 and December 1997 and obtained 1200 documents. After removing duplicates ($n = 567$) and applying exclusion criteria, 67 records were analysed thematically. The following PCA constructs emerged: congruence, warmth, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and locus of control, as well as two outcomes of the optimal manifestation of PCA constructs: confirmation and differentiation. We also present two PCA relational dynamics to explain optimal relationships: circularity and reciprocity. Interpreting intergenerational relationships through the lens of the PCA not only identifies the constructs of optimal

relationships but also offers recommendations for transforming intergenerational relationships towards new levels of interpersonal cohesion.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that generational cohesion is under threat with studies showing intergenerational discord, strife, and tension, with serious implications for older and younger people, worldwide ([Aboderin, 2017](#); [Keating, 2011](#); [Muia et al., 2013](#)). The term generation refers to different age groups who are living and experiencing the same social–historical processes ([Mannheim, 1952](#)). In the context of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the boundaries between who is related or unrelated tend to blur; those who have consanguineal ties are regarded as family, but it also includes unrelated people who form part of the household or community ([Aboderin, 2017](#)). This article focuses on intergenerational relationships in SSA and South Africa (SA) because the concern is that strained intergenerational relationships prevail to the detriment both of older and younger people.

The general systems perspective has been adopted to view the relationship between generations as a dynamic process of interaction ([Von Bertalanffy & von, 1968](#)). Relationships are accordingly regarded as self-regulating systems, organising themselves towards maintaining homeostasis through feedback ([Watzlawick et al., 2011](#)). Feedback refers to a system's reaction to internal influences (e.g., the absence of adults in a family system due to HIV/AIDS is seen as an influence within a system) or external influences (e.g., the adoption of technology as an influence from outside the system). Self-regulating systems include both negative and positive feedback ([Bateson, 2000](#)). Negative feedback means that the relational system rejects an internal or external influence to maintain the status quo. However, when the system accepts change, adapts, and establishes a new norm, it is known as positive feedback ([Bateson, 2000](#)). A balance of positive and negative feedback, of change and invariance, results in the complexity of the relational system.

Relationships in this study imply communication in the form of verbal and nonverbal messages, which consist of different constructs and can be effective (e.g., empathy) or ineffective (e.g., judgement; [Watzlawick et al., 2011](#)). High volumes of communication and high levels of negative feedback in intergenerational relationships amplify the impact of each iteration as it builds on the impact of previous iterations.

Existing theories to explain intergenerational relationships include intergenerational solidarity and conflict (see [Bengston & Roberts, 1991](#)), and intergenerational ambivalence (see [Lüscher, 2011](#); [Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998](#)), as well as the heuristic construct (part of a theory), generational intelligence (see [Biggs & Lowenstein, 2011](#)). These theories are widely applied but are not always clear about the constructs at play

in the dynamic manifestation of intergenerational relations in that they identify the subjective experience of generational members, socio-cultural perspectives, as well as the outcomes of intergenerational relationships. To this end, Self-Interactional Group Theory (SIGT) offers a useful application (see [Roos, 2016a](#), pp 141–170). SIGT explains intergenerational relationships in terms of three levels of interaction, namely: intra-individual, inter-individual, and group level. However, SIGT does not indicate what constructs inform effective intergenerational interactions and why these constructs specifically.

A theoretical framework whose constructs are associated with optimal relationships pointed us to Rogers' person-centred approach (PCA; [Rogers, 1961](#), [1980](#), [1995](#)). The PCA is well-known and has been widely applied. We argued that, by identifying Rogers' contributions in the contexts in which he developed them, a more nuanced and textured understanding could emerge and offer insights into how fully functioning generational members can live authentically and harmoniously with their own emotions and reactions, while at the same time fostering an environment in which others are able to do the same. Accordingly, we had to refer to Rogers' original work and consequently, the following research question guided the research: Which constructs from the person-centred approach defined by Rogers in the context of therapy could be relevant to explaining optimal intergenerational relationships? This study, therefore, aimed to identify constructs from Rogers' PCA approach to interpret optimal or ineffective intergenerational relationships.

Method

We conducted a scoping review ([Arksey & O'Malley, 2005](#)), which is commonly used for exploration, to clarify the working definitions and conceptual boundaries of a topic or field of study ([Munn et al., 2018](#)). The methodological framework for a scoping review consists of (a) identifying the research question to cover the extent of literature, (b) identifying significant studies from sources, (c) making a study selection that involves applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, (d) charting the data by extracting from included studies, and (e) consulting with stakeholders to obtain additional understandings ([Arksey & O'Malley, 2005](#); [Levac et al., 2010](#)). The guidelines established by PRISMA-ScR ([Tricco et al., 2018](#)) checklist were used.

Procedure

Relevant electronic databases and reference lists as well as scientific journals were used to search for appropriate literature for the scoping review ([Levac et al., 2010](#)), including EbscoHost (Academic Search Premiere; Africa-Wide Information; E-Journals; ERIC; PsycARTICLES; PsycINFO; SocINDEX; Health Source, Nursing/academic edit),

African Journals (previously SAEPublications), and Scopus. Studies that had been authored or co-authored by Rogers and that identified constructs of PCA were retrieved and qualified for inclusion.

A keyword search of books and articles authored by Rogers was conducted and texts were included if they had been published in English between 1951 and December 1997 (the year of Rogers' last original writing). Publication categories excluded from this scoping review were training manuals or updates, book reviews or sections, policy or government documents, summaries of judgements or papers, volume content or table of contents, conference programmes, blogs, reference books, and newspaper and magazine articles. Furthermore, original works by Rogers that described the application of the PCA constructs were excluded because we were interested in the descriptions of the constructs themselves.

In the course of the analysis, 1200 records (publications) were identified by means of a database and journal search using the terms indicated above. The records sourced were exported to RAYAN (<https://www.rayyan.ai>) and grouped together. After the duplicates ($n = 567$) had been removed, and the exclusion criteria applied, 633 publications were screened for eligibility, and 262 records were identified for potential inclusion by reading the abstracts and titles of the publications and assessing whether they were original publications by Carl Rogers (as opposed to other authors with the last name Rogers). A further 195 articles were excluded as they had not originally been authored by Rogers, leaving 67 articles for inclusion in the review (see [Figure 1](#) for the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram). Twelve books authored by Rogers after 1951 were located and three were excluded because they focused on the application of the PCA to other contexts beyond therapeutic relationships (such as power, education, and marriage) and offered no new information about the relevant constructs. One book used for the scoping review was co-authored by Rogers and Buber. Only the chapters written by Rogers were used ([Buber et al., 1997](#)).

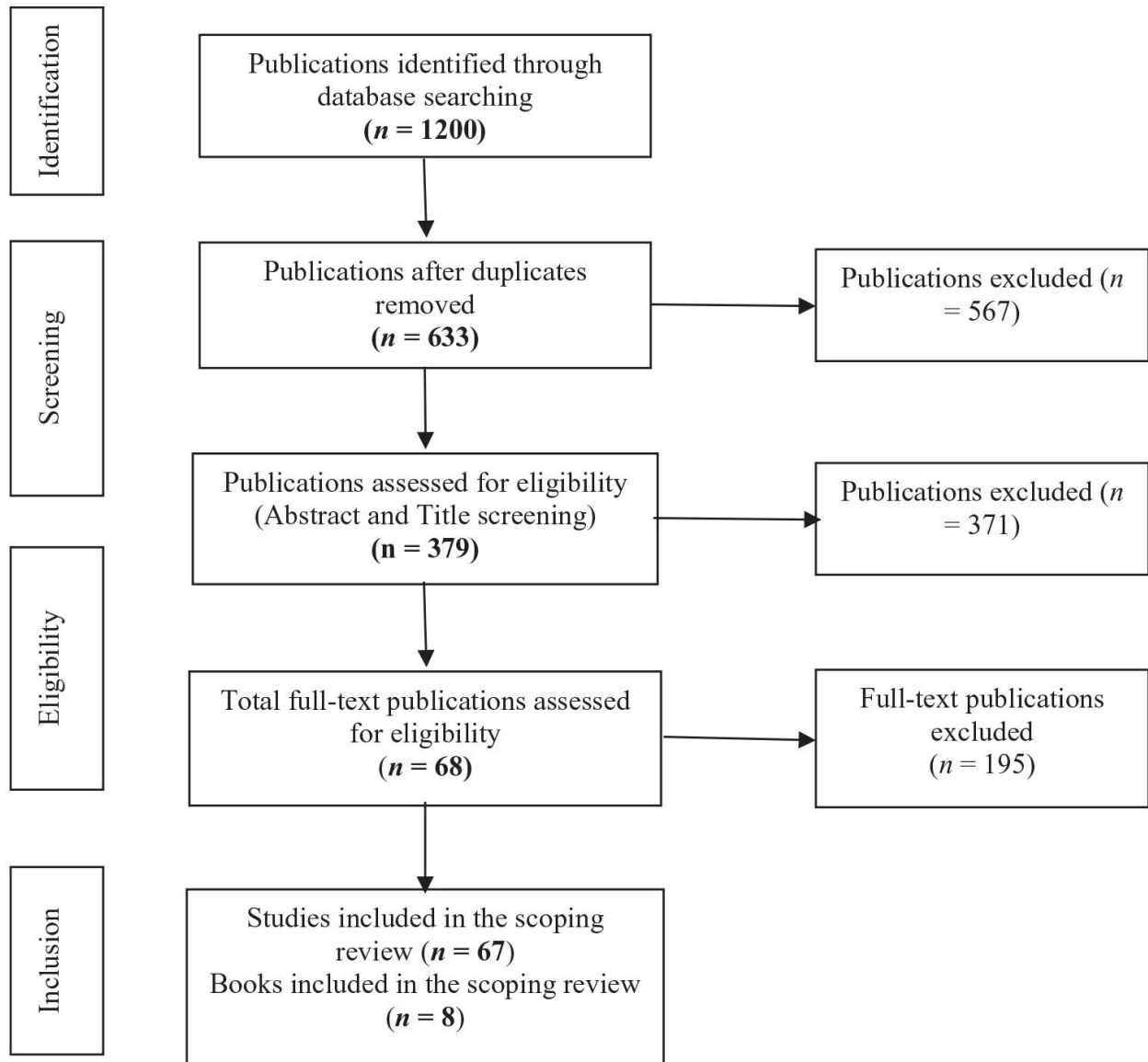


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram.

Data analysis

Analysis of data in this study followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#): familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, exploration for themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and compilation of the final report. Atlas.ti 23 was used for the extraction of identified themes. Ethical considerations in conducting a scoping review are predominantly centred on upholding transparency, rigour, and integrity ([Walby, 2015](#)). The iterative nature of the process was meticulously documented in each phase to ensure transferability. Adherence to PRISMA-ScR guidelines provided a structured

approach for conducting transparent and comprehensive scoping reviews. Credibility was maintained through ongoing collaboration with co-researchers, and any discrepancies between the first and second authors were resolved through consultation with the third author, who served as an arbitrator in final decision-making.

Results

Findings were grouped into three themes: person-centred constructs, person-centred outcomes, and person-centred relational dynamics, each with their subthemes presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Person-centred constructs, outcomes, and relational dynamics.

Person-centred constructs	Person-centred outcomes	Person-centred relational dynamics
Congruence	Confirmation	Circularity
- On a continuum	Differentiation	Reciprocity
Warmth		
- Emotional warmth		
- Warm interest		
Empathy		
- Perspective taking		
- Attentive listening		
- Accuracy		
- On a continuum		
Unconditional positive regard (UPR)		
- Acceptance and openness		
- Warm interest, everything is permitted		
- Unconditional (everything is permitted)		

Locus of control

A definition and discussion of each theme with its subthemes follows.

Person-centred constructs

The constructs that emerged included: congruence, warmth, empathy, unconditional positive regard (UPR), and locus of control. We first describe each construct according to Rogers, then present its antithesis (opposite), before applying it to intergenerational relations.

Congruence

Defined as genuine, authentic, and consistent expression, congruence refers to the alignment between verbal and nonverbal messages, and between experience, awareness, and communication ([Rogers, 1951](#)). Congruence presents from a high level of authenticity and transparency to a lower level, typically referred to as incongruence, which implies a lack of alignment between internal and external experiences.

Congruence in intergenerational relationships can be achieved when a generational member, for example, confirms another's statements with a smile, open posture, and warm tones, which exemplify congruent communication. Congruence communicates respect, regard, and care. When older and younger people viewed each other as genuine in their interactions, they reported the following: 'We came here not knowing each other but on Saturday we became one big family . . . It seems as if we have known each other for a long time' ([Chigeza et al., 2020](#), p. 355).

Incongruence, according to [Rogers \(1951\)](#), creates uncertainty because there is a discrepancy or contradiction between what is being observed and what is being said, or how it is said. Incongruence in relationships breeds distance, defensiveness, tension, and conflict.

Warmth

Emotional warmth is a genuine interest in, and acceptance of, another person ([Rogers, 1951](#)), observable in non-verbal communication, such as reassuring eye contact, soft facial expressions, smiling, and inviting verbal tones (e.g., soft voice, gentle volume, longer enunciation of words). According to [Rogers \(1952\)](#), 'warmth and liking [gives the] permission to be completely free, and at the same time completely safe, with safety and freedom existing in a climate of empathic understanding' (p. 354).

The antithesis of warmth is hostility, which contributes to creating interpersonal distance. [Rogers \(1951\)](#) describes it as follows: ' . . . if a person is hostile toward me, and I can see nothing in him at the moment except the hostility, I am quite sure that I will react in a defensive way to the hostility' (p. 161). This was evident in the example of a younger

person who deliberately locked an older person's cell phone in retaliation for the latter's dismissive behaviour towards him ([Roos & Robertson, 2019](#)). A lack of warmth is communicated through physical distance, disparaging verbal tones, lack of eye contact, and lack of direct and engaged conversation.

Empathy

Empathy is as an accurate understanding of the other's internal frame of reference, (the subjective emotional experience that occurs within the other person; [Rogers, 1951](#)).

Empathy occurs both on a cognitive and an emotional level ([Buber et al., 1997](#); [Rogers, 1951, 1961](#)). On a cognitive level (empathic understanding), it involves the cognitive grasp of the other's internal world, encompassing thoughts, feelings, and meanings. This requires active listening, reflection, and the ability to convey an accurate understanding of the other's perspective. The ability to understand and communicate empathically relies on two skills: perspective taking and attentive listening.

1.

Perspective taking enables generational members to move from their own stance to adopt the perspective of the other and accurately verbalise their position, as if from the other's perspective. Perspective taking requires cognitive (ability) and relational (willingness) flexibility to see from the other's perspective ([Rogers, 1951](#)).

2.

Attentive listening means that the listener pays careful attention to the verbal and nonverbal communication of the other ([Rogers, 1957](#)). Attentive listening in the sense of empathic communication is not a merely a reflection of someone's words back to them ([Rogers, 1980](#)). Empathy is an attitude reflected in one's endeavours to understand the feelings of the other with increasing depth and accuracy.

Accuracy is the key that unlocks the interpersonal impact of empathy. Accuracy is not limited to the meaning of the emotional experience of the other, but also involves matching the depth, energy, intensity, and nuance of the emotional expression being shared ([Rogers, 1951, 1980, 1995](#)) and exists on a continuum, from minimal understanding to profound empathic connection. Intergenerational research highlights that the presence of empathy, particularly displayed in patience (emotional empathy), understanding (cognitive empathy and perspective taking), attentive listening, and respect (cognitive empathy and perspective taking), positively impact on older persons, as reported by an older woman: 'I enjoyed it [the interaction] because you were very friendly, you listened, you were very understanding, and you smiled a lot' ([Roos et al., 2022](#), p. 193).

The antithesis of empathy would be a lack of understanding and judgement, which, according to [Rogers \(1995\)](#), could present as follows: "I understand what is wrong with you"; 'I understand what makes you act that way'; or 'I too have experienced your

trouble and I reacted very differently” (p. 65). Judgement is also based on the ageist treatment of people, which is illustrated by a 76-year-old woman’s observation: ‘Young men . . . claim we are old and can’t make use of the land as they would’ ([Nagaddya, 2022](#), p. 2054). Generational members who give and receive an evaluative understanding would not feel understood, thereby leading to misunderstandings and conflict.

Unconditional positive regard

UPR embodies the unconditional appreciation of an individual’s inherent worth and value with open acceptance ([Buber et al., 1997](#); [Rogers, 1951, 1963](#)). The quality of the words is accepting and confirming, and is accompanied by non-verbal messages, such as nodding, smiling, and a relaxed and open body posture when people are actively listening to each other without interruption, and with sustained eye contact. It signifies caring for each other in a non-possessive manner and acknowledging each person as having their own feelings and experiences ([Rogers & Stevens, 1967](#)). UPR was expressed by an adult woman, who said in relation to older people: ‘I have never seen such humility and love displayed by the older people’ ([Chigeza et al., 2020](#), p. 354).

The antithesis of UPR, according to [Rogers \(1957\)](#), refers to a ‘selective evaluating attitude where individuals are categorized as “bad in these ways, good in those”’ (p. 829). This was evident when older women expected to be abandoned by younger generations when they no longer received their social grant money (see [Chigeza et al., 2020](#)). Consequently, this lack of UPR can lead to feelings of mistrust, discord, and resentment.

Locus of control

Locus of control refers to whether a person is self-directed (internal locus of control) or directed by external forces ([Rogers, 1951](#)). Internal locus of control refers to individuals’ self-directedness towards actualisation, which means being given, and making use of, the opportunity to be self-directed ([Rogers, 1960](#)). Rogers emphasises that the conditions for the development of self-directedness allow individuals to ‘speak for themselves’ ([1951](#), p. 61).

For instance, research conducted by [Chirkov et al. \(2003\)](#) investigated the role of autonomy support in the classroom environment in Ghana (SSA) and its impact on students’ academic motivation and locus of control. They found that when teachers (older people) support autonomy and self-directed learning, students (younger people) are more likely to develop an internal locus of control and feel empowered to direct themselves towards academic success.

External locus of control becomes apparent when there is an imposition, judgement, or restriction on the opinions, thoughts, feelings, and needs of others ([Rogers, 1995](#)). This

manifests with threats, ultimatums, bribes, criticisms, and insults, disrupting the autonomy of generational members and hindering their active participation in the relationship. External locus of control emerges when people resort to controlling tactics, undermining the autonomy of others. Externalised locus of control was demonstrated in a study conducted by [Roos \(2016b\)](#), when an older woman communicated an expectation that the government should be intervening with her problematic children. She insisted that the government ought to be closing taverns and forcing her adult children to go to church. She demonstrated an external locus of control in wanting outside intervention from the government in her relationship with her children, while not understanding that the government, by exerting external control by closing taverns, would be unlikely to cause the adult children to stop drinking (i.e., would be ineffective).

Person-centred outcomes

Two outcomes emerged from the data: confirmation and differentiation.

Confirmation

Confirmation means accepting someone as they are now, in this moment. It involves acknowledging and embracing the complete potential of the other person, thus making a positive impact on what they can become. Confirmation involves recognising and valuing the uniqueness of the other and acknowledging the status and inherent worth of the other ([Rogers, 1951](#)). Literature showing confirmation between intergenerational members is scarce. [Hewett et al. \(2016\)](#) note that generational members not only expressed a need for confirmation by the other generation, but also reported an increase in enjoyment of the intergenerational interactions when such confirmation was received. This is similar to the findings of [Chigeza et al. \(2020\)](#) in which older as well as younger people found their enjoyment of the interaction greatly increased when there were increased levels of confirmation between generational members.

The lack of confirmation is illustrated in ageism. [Aboderin's \(2017\)](#) study examined how traditional norms and cultural values influence intergenerational relationships and caregiving practices in SSA. The research found that adults often face discrimination and neglect due to prevailing ageist attitudes that prioritise the needs and interests of younger generations. Similarly, [Schatz and Ogunmefun \(2007\)](#) highlighted how ageist attitudes intersect with gender norms, particularly affecting older women in multi-generational households impacted by HIV/AIDS in South Africa. These women, despite their significant caregiving roles, face discrimination and neglect by younger family members due to ageist and gendered expectations.

Differentiation

Effective differentiation, from [Rogers' \(1951, 1963\)](#) perspective, involves a process of moving from 'generalisations . . . to an examination of the rich primary experiences upon which they are based' (p. 143). Differentiation means becoming different. This might mean leaving a system fully or partially, adopting values that are different from those handed down by previous generations, and choosing ways of life that are different from systems of origin ([Rogers, 1951](#)). Through effective differentiation people can distinguish between themselves and the external world, recognising and understanding they are distinct from others ([Rogers & Stevens, 1967](#)). Effective differentiation also promotes reintegration. This means that as generational members become more accepting of one another as separate and unique individuals, it ultimately fosters healthier and more supportive relationships and allows for safe and constructive strengthening of bonds between them.

Differentiation needs to be optimally managed for intergenerational relationships to survive. As younger people adopt new and different values, they differentiate from the older people. Older people face the challenge of younger people separating themselves from the extended family, for financial reasons, individualism, and urbanisation. Younger people may fragment from their systems of origin when their changing values and identities are not accepted by older people whom they may feel pressurised to emulate in order to remain a member of the system.

Person-centred relational dynamics

Two constructs related to relational dynamics from the PCA are circularity and reciprocity.

Circularity

When people communicate with circularity, they acknowledge their share and the share of the other as well as the impact of the context on the overall effectiveness of the relationship or the interaction ([Rogers, 1980](#)). [Chigeza et al. \(2020\)](#) provide examples of circularity in intergenerational relationships. Older women in relation to younger people: 'I learned that if you talk to the young generation in a sensible way, they will respect you' (p. 355). Adult women: 'Those children (the adolescent/young adult group) are full of love; if you talk to them nicely, they will respect you' (p. 355). Younger women commented: 'I saw that respect changes everything' (p. 355).

The opposite of a circular approach is a linear approach. People who adopt this approach behave as if communication is one-sided, and do not acknowledge other perspectives ([Rogers, \(1951\)](#)). Adopting a linear perspective is demonstrated when an older man in an intergenerational activity stands up and asserts:

'I am refusing to bring the youth culture and the older people culture together. I still stand that we have to teach our children that whether somebody comes whether an

older white lady, they have to know that this is my mother. Finish!!!' ([Roos, 2016b](#), p. 113)

Reciprocity

Communication takes place in reciprocal feedback loops of impact and reaction. Reciprocity emphasises a dynamic whereby both individuals contribute actively to the relationship ([Rogers, 1995](#); [Rogers & Stevens, 1967](#)). Promoting reciprocity in intergenerational relationships is crucial for collaboration and enhancing the quality of these relationships by acknowledging the contributions of each generation and creating a supportive environment for shared experiences and perspectives.

Conversely, if there is no reciprocity, there is either indifference, apathy, or dependence, which according to [Rogers and Stevens \(1967\)](#), pose a direct threat to the opportunity for the relationship to result in person-centred outcomes. This is confirmed by [Van der Geest \(2002\)](#) who found that 'both elderly and young people confirm that respect and care depend on reciprocity' (p. 26).

Discussion

This study aimed to identify person-centred constructs from Rogers' original work and to apply these to intergenerational relationships. While the PCA is well established, it is important to analyse Rogers' original writing because interpretations through the application of Rogerian thinking across multiple disciplines in the body of knowledge might distort his original meaning, especially where he indicated how the constructs should be applied, and in what order.

An important finding of the scoping review is that Rogers identifies congruence as the first construct. This is important for effective intergenerational relationships because, drawing on [Rogers \(1995\)](#), the more congruent, the clearer the message received by others. This contributes to a predictable interpersonal context, which enhances interpersonal safety. The opposite is also true: when there is a discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal messages, it creates distance and unsafe interpersonal contexts. [Rogers \(1951\)](#) also identified another kind of incongruence that emerges in the process of development of the self and is relevant for effective intergenerational relations. Literature indicates that when younger people feel and behave in ways they believe they should not feel and behave, this results in internal incongruence, defensiveness, and anxiety ([Solomon & Zerach, 2020](#)). This is evident when younger people anticipate judgement and rejection from older people ([Roos, 2016b](#)). The construct of congruence serves as an antidote to intergenerational ambivalence ([Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998](#)) because congruence contributes to the notion that people know where they stand with each other ([Rogers, 1995](#)).

Emotional closeness relates to intergenerational solidarity (see [Bengston & Roberts, 1991](#)), which refers to various forms of assistance, care, and support between generational members. Warmth goes beyond solidarity, as it speaks to the quality of emotional closeness between members and is the underlying mechanism that facilitates sustainable intergenerational cohesion.

Perspective taking is closely associated with generational intelligence, which, according to [Biggs and Lowenstein \(2011\)](#), is important for understanding the perspective of the age-other. Generational members who listen attentively can verbalise emotional and cognitive empathy accurately, not by 'mirroring' or 'reflecting', but rather by authentically communicating understanding by checking this through empathic utterances. On the receiving end, people notice these non-verbal and verbal cues from the other when they sense 'the feelings and personal meanings from the 'inside' is accurately communicated as an understanding to [the other]' ([Rogers, 1995](#), p. 64), thereby fulfilling the condition of empathy. In contrast, when generational members are not able to take the perspective of the age-other, they do not demonstrate an empathic understanding. [Roos \(2016b\)](#) found that when older persons were asked to reflect what they heard younger persons' said, the older persons reported it from their perspective thereby demonstrating a lack of perspective taking.

UPR, according to [Rogers \(1957\)](#), manifests as a non-judgemental stance, demonstrating complete acceptance of every facet of a person. When generational members receive UPR, it creates a foundation for authentic connections, understanding, and the cultivation of meaningful relationships. It is detrimental if the hierarchical relationship is accompanied by conditional acceptance because it then fosters defensiveness, hostility, and tension, obstructing cooperation and closeness. In the absence of UPR, fertile ground exists for the development of intergenerational ambivalence (see [Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998](#)), which creates a checkmate situation in which the simultaneous conflicting experiences or perceptions of intergenerational others result in limited possibilities to develop intergenerational cohesion.

A construct not always associated with Rogers is locus of control. Internal locus of control demonstrated by generational members contributes to feelings of empowerment and agency in effective relationships, but when an external locus of control operates, a lack of accountability or empowerment could lead to hostility and blame.

We identified two important PCA outcomes for intergenerational relationships: confirmation and differentiation. Confirmation is regarded as acknowledging the status of the other in the relationship, which [Rogers \(1995\)](#) describes as the profound experience of being fully seen, heard, and accepted by another. Confirmation is, however, compromised when generational members adopt a one-up position irrespective of the context, for example, when older people demand respect and deference from younger people based solely on their seniority ([Roos, 2016b](#)).

Effective differentiation can lead to significantly improved intergenerational dynamics as it enables generational members to move beyond simplistic and generalised views of each other and engage instead in a deeper examination of their rich experiences, thus allowing difference (positive feedback) while remaining connected in a system (negative feedback). In other words, effective differentiation also promotes reintegration, which means that as generational members become more accepting of one another as separate and unique individuals it allows for safe and constructive strengthening of bonds between them. In ineffective relationships, if sufficient minimum conditions are not met, the ineffective communication becomes compounded, leading to deterioration of interpersonal safety, and resulting in tension and conflict between people.

The person-centred approach fosters growth-promoting intergenerational relationships through a process of circularity. When each generational member strives to authentically express their inherent regard for others (reaction), it promotes congruent communication that is perceived as clear by the recipient (impact). This clarity provides an opportunity for the receiver to verify their understanding (reaction) with accuracy, depending on the generational member's flexibility in adopting the perspective of others. Unconditional and non-evaluative understanding, effectively conveyed both through verbal (empathic statement checking for accuracy) and non-verbal means (tone, body language, and facial expressions), results in confirmation – the sense of being seen, understood, and unconditionally accepted. This interactive process (reaction, impact, and reaction) facilitates increasing congruence, reduced defensiveness, and heightened responsiveness to others' congruent communication, thus cultivating a warm rapport that allows each person the freedom to be themselves and direct their own lives with an internal locus of control. This freedom extends to meaningfully understanding and appreciating others, thereby reinforcing the mutual regard of the other. Circular feedback loops and reciprocal interactions significantly contribute to creating emotional safety, enabling conducive conditions for intergenerational relationships. Consistent provision of these conditions by at least one member enhances the likelihood of reciprocal positive responses among generational members. [Muia et al. \(2013\)](#) assert that a 'cardinal defining aspect of intergenerational relationships is the fact that they are normally governed by exchange as well as the norms of reciprocity' (p. 2).

The value of applying constructs identified by Rogers to explain effective intergenerational relationships holds promise in the sense that change in one part of the system can result in a change in the rest of the system, which benefits all: when one generational member begins to communicate more effectively, it can enhance the quality of the whole relationship, which could improve the effectiveness of the communication of the other.

Conclusion

Age-inclusive societies benefit the well-being both of older and younger people but depend on effective and optimal intergenerational relationships. Existing theories of intergenerational relationships do not necessarily focus on what constitutes the interactions and how the interplay contributes to effective relationships. We argued that a person-centred approach and Rogers original work present detailed and nuanced constructs explaining outcomes and dynamics that comprise effective intergenerational relationships. We identified and applied these constructs to optimal and ineffective intergenerational relationships, focusing on research in SSA, and SA specifically. We believe that this application of Rogers' original work contributes to knowledge about how relationships could inform conducive outcomes for intergenerational relationships, such as openness, deep communication, freedom, collaboration, individuality, and interdependence. By contributing to the understanding of how these constructs manifest in real-world scenarios, our work not only expands transferable knowledge but also offers tangible implications for supporting intergenerational relationships, particularly in low-resourced environments in which optimal relationships are vital for the well-being of older and younger people.

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