



Intergenerational Solidarity: Prospects for Integrating Top-Bottom (Top-Down) and Bottom-Top (Bottom-Up) Policy in Nigeria

Grace Oluremilekun Akanbi¹

Abstract: Integrating top-down and bottom-up policy through intergenerational solidarity is imperative. The need for this study arises from the prevalent practice of older generations or those in top administrative positions formulating policies without the input of the younger generation. This practice occurs even in family decision-making processes, as documented in prior research. This study, which is both historical and survey-based, addresses this issue. The Intergenerational Solidarity Scale (IGSS) was used to generate data on the acceptability of intergenerational solidarity and its prospects for both top-down and bottom-up policy. The 25-item questionnaire was administered through a Google form, with the link shared on several academic and social platforms for responses. A total of 289 people responded to the questionnaire, but not for all variables. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The results show the highest support for intergenerational solidarity among the 48-57 age bracket, with more women (151), more non-science majors (165), more Christians (157), and more Master's degree holders. The responses are a testament to the fact that it is time for academics, administrators, and other stakeholders to change their approach to developing and implementing policies that include youth. This will allow intergenerational solidarity to thrive.

Keywords: youth; generations; occupation; learning

¹ Senior Lecturer, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria, Corresponding author: ayo4remi@gmail.com.



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1. Introduction

The theme for the 2022 United Nations (UN) Youth Celebration was “Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages.” The world is witnessing a demand for constant interaction between the old and the young to effectively develop policies, laws, and guidelines that serve as blueprints for operations in organisational settings. However, it is an age-old practice for policies to be formulated from the top and passed down to the grassroots for operation, without considering the end users and those the policies will affect. Most policymakers, especially from Africa, believe the younger generation has little to contribute to policy-making processes. This is a quantitative survey, and the Intergenerational Solidarity Scale (IGSS) questionnaire has been administered to collect data. In light of UNESCO's four pillars of education—learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be—intergenerational solidarity is necessary to uphold these pillars, sustain the world, and ensure that every generation remains relevant, as this research recommends.

Reorientation is necessary to formulate and implement pertinent policies for this dispensation. It calls for a shift from autocracy to networking between the top and the bottom if the nation is genuinely committed to intergenerational solidarity. Networking across generations (old and young, or top and bottom) will create space for all ages. Educational processes, policy evaluation, mentoring, and community service/participation will benefit immensely from the network, ensuring no generation is left behind. The earlier nations consider incorporating youth into evolving policies, the better for the world; otherwise, children will see policies as “their policy” (the older generation) rather than “our policy” (intergenerational). The primary focus of this research is to advocate for a policy on youth involvement in every decision-making process that affects society.

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primary focus of this research is to advocate for a policy on youth involvement in every decision-making process that affects society.

Given the above, this paper focuses on clarifying concepts and identifying areas that need urgent intergenerational solidarity. It is becoming evident that the older generation can mentor the younger generation, and vice versa, especially in information and communication technology.

2. Problem of the Study

What makes society dynamic is the updating of knowledge and practices to align with evolving global best practices. However, most African societies do not believe the younger generation should be involved in policy formulation and decision-making. This attitude is reflected in the revised Intergenerational Solidarity Index (ISI) developed by Krznaric (2020). The index appraises the importance of different nations and measures how much each provides for future generations' well-being, using ten (10) environmental, social, and economic solidarity indicators in 122 countries. Unfortunately, the last eight (8) nations on the ISI table, namely Zambia (18.4), Mali (15.2), Cameroon (15.2), Mauritania (14.8), Nigeria (14.3), Angola (13.9), Guinea (10.1) and Benin (9.31) were all from Africa. Iceland (85.7), Sweden (81.1), and Nepal (77.9) were at the top of the table. The result is a call to action for Nigeria and other countries with below-average indexes. There is therefore a need to call policymakers' attention to the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes in policy formulation involving the younger generation. This approach is the way to go, which is why this research was conducted. It is also pertinent to note that when youths are involved at any level in formulating any policy, they are more committed to its success through their adequate mobilising power.

2.1. Research Questions

To address the issue of intergenerational solidarity, the following research questions were raised to guide the presentation of the research outcome. They are as follows:

- 1) What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on age group?
- 2) What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on gender?

- 3) What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on fields of study?
- 4) What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on religion?
- 5) What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on occupation?

3. Literature Review and Conceptual Clarifications

At this point, some conceptual clarifications are necessary to fully understand the discourse of this research. Some concepts may mean different things to different people or may be ambiguous. This research analyses all the significant keywords that emphasise their importance.

3.1. What is Intergenerational?

Intergenerational relationships are almost self-explanatory. They involve bringing together multiple generations, old and young. They facilitate mutual understanding and participation in family or societal affairs. Springate, Atkinson, and Martin (2008) observed that intergenerational practice increases understanding, friendship, enjoyment, and confidence among both older and younger generations. These things are necessary to make formulated policies work and to have an impact on society. The intergenerational household is typical in African culture, where great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, and children live together and make decisions jointly. Most of the time, the findings of the older generation are often considered the best, showing traces of top-down policy. In contrast, if integrated, the findings of the younger generation can lead to more robust and far-reaching decisions.

3.2. Solidarity

Solidarity arises from or is a product of shared responsibilities, purposes, objectives and interests between members of a group or between classes, people, and, in this discourse, between old and young generations. According to Osiyemi (2024), solidarity involves collaboration that enables people to achieve more than they could on their own. It harnesses the unique skills and expertise of team members to produce

more results that drive better outcomes and solutions. Some synonyms for solidarity will further enhance our understanding of what this study advocates and will help us genuinely discuss whether the world is ready for intergenerational solidarity. They are accord, agreement, alliance, comradeship, consensus, confederation, federation, fellowship, harmony, indivisibility, oneness, sameness, support, teamwork, unanimity, undividedness, unification, uniformity and union¹. However, the question is whether the older generation is willing and ready to allow the younger generation to have comradeship, sameness, and uniformity.

3.3. Intergenerational Solidarity

Intergenerational solidarity refers to mutual support and cooperation among people of different ages, particularly between older people and youth. UN (2024) submits that “education is an expression of inter-generational solidarity,” and it should also be “a means of ensuring greater contact, exchange and respect between the generations.” UN rightly observed the traditional practice of children and young people learning from adults in formal care and education settings. Still, adults can also learn a lot from children and younger generations. According to Bauer (2020), “the principle of ‘intergenerational solidarity’ ought to mean a concern, by all generations, with the well-being of those older — or younger—than they” (para. 7). It has become increasingly important in social contracts, as it supports social cohesion and ensures that policies consider the needs of all age groups. Intergenerational solidarity promotes social equity, strengthens community ties, and encourages civic participation. Working with different age groups on community issues can lead to more robust and widely supported policies. These policies should adopt a balanced approach that acknowledges and supports the contributions and well-being of younger and older generations.

3.4. Top-Bottom (Top Down)

Top-bottom is an arrangement in which policies, especially education policies, emanate from the top echelon of administrators (often the older generation) and are passed down to implementing institutions without the younger generation’s involvement in developing the content, implementation processes, and monitoring

¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/thesaurus/solidarity>.

and evaluation. In support of the above submission, Li (2023) admits that a hierarchical structure characterises the top-down management policy mode in organisations. Decisions and directives are made by top-level authorities and passed down to lower levels. It emphasises centralised control, formal processes, and standardised procedures, in contrast to the bottom-up mode, which emphasises autonomy, empowerment, and individual and team participation at all levels of the organisation. When decisions are made from the top and instructions are passed downwards to the actual operators, regardless of their applicability, it is essentially autocratic. In other words, there is no agreement, consensus, or teamwork when handing down the policy.

3.5. Bottom-Top (Bottom Up)

The bottom-top implies evolving policies from the bottom level (the younger generation) with input from the top. Considering the realities, involving the younger generation in policy formulation aligns with current trends. It is not saying that entrusting the entire process to the younger generation provides them with meaningful opportunities to participate. According to Imperial (2021), there has been debate over which approach to policy formulation is better. Top-down adherence argues that implementation problems are minimised through careful procedure specification, viewing implementation as essentially an administrative challenge. On the other hand, bottom-up adherence argues that “effective implementation allows the policy to be adapted based on the interaction of a policy with the local institutional setting” (para. 1), and “context matters and implementation involves bargaining rather than the explicit control of higher-level decision-makers” (para. 2). Li’s (2023) observation that the bottom-top approach encourages creativity, experimentation, and innovation from the grassroots level, making it necessary for the two methods to synchronise effectively formulate and implement policies.

4. Methodology/Research Design

This research adopted a historical and descriptive survey design, also known as a statistical research design, because it is theory-based and describes the observed situation to verify its accuracy. Heath (2023) submitted that “besides making observations and comparing and analysing them, descriptive studies often develop knowledge concepts and provide solutions to critical issues” (para. 3), aligning with the purpose of this study.

4.1. The Population of the Study

The study population included all those who could complete the online questionnaire posted on various social media platforms, both academic and non-academic, as this was convenient. No particular sample and sampling techniques were used. This aligns with Gall, Borg and Gall's (1996) submission that "Researchers often need to select a convenience sample or face the possibility that they will be unable to do the study... it usually is better to do a study with a convenience sample than to do no study at all" (p. 228).

4.2. Instrument and Data Collection

The research data were collected using a questionnaire. The Intergenerational Solidarity Scale (IGSS) was used to generate data on intergenerational solidarity and its prospects for both top-down and bottom-up policy integration. The 25-item questionnaire, including some Sociodemographic Variables, was administered through a Google form, and the link was shared on several academic and social platforms for responses. A total of 289 persons responded to the questionnaire. The results are presented below.

5. Results, Data Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages. All the research questions were also answered. Data collected on intergenerational solidarity are summed and grouped into three (3) groups: 61-70, 71-80, and 81-90. To form this group, responses to the 4-point Likert scale items are summed to determine both positive and negative reactions. Then, the range is calculated to determine the midpoint in the responses.

Table 1. Responses on Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	138	47.75
Female	151	52.25
Total	289	100.0
Age Group		
18-27 Years	4	1.38
28-37 Years	6	2.10
38-47Years	48	16.60

48-57Years	192	66.44
58-67Years	39	13.49
Total	289	100.0
Educational Background		
Bachelor's Degree	29	10.51
Master's Degree	182	65.94
Ph.D	65	23.55
Total	276	100.0
Fields of Study		
Science	120	42.11
Non-Science	165	57.89
Total	285	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	157	56.88
Islam	119	43.12
Total	276	100.0
Occupation		
Civil Servant	212	73.36
Non-Civil Servants	44	15.22
Retirees	33	11.42
Total	289	100.0

Source: The Data Collected

Table 1 revealed that there are 138 (47.75%) males, 151 (52.25%) females, 4 (1.38%) in the 18-27 years age group, 6 (2.10%) in the 28-37 years age group, and 48 (16.60%) in the 38-47 years age group. The 48-57 years age bracket had the most respondents, 192 (66.44%), while the 58-67 years age bracket had 39 (13.49%) responses. The highest number of responses regarding educational qualifications came from master's degree holders, with 182 (65.94%), followed by Ph.D. holders, with 65 (23.55%), and bachelor's degree holders, with 29 (10.51%). In the occupational fields of study, 165 non-science respondents (57.89%) were included. In comparison, sciences were 120 (42.11 %). Christians who responded were 157 (56.88 %), and Muslims, 119 (43.12%). Civil servants were 212 (73.36%), non-civil servants were 44 (15.22%), and retirees were 33 (11.42%). In summary, the distribution includes more females, those aged 48-57, master's degree holders, non-science respondents, Christians, and civil servant respondents.

Research Question (RQ) 1: What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on age group?

Table 2. Levels of Acceptability of Intergenerational Solidarity Based on Age Group

			Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score			Total
			61-70	71-80	81-90	
Age	18-27	Count	2	2	0	4
		%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	28-37	Count	2	4	0	6
		%	29.2%	70.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	38-47	Count	14	34	0	48
		%	29.2%	70.8%	0.0%	100.0%
	48-57	Count	71	91	17	179
		%	39.7%	50.8%	9.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	115	144	17	276
		%	41.7%	52.2%	6.2%	100.0%

From Table 2, respondents in the 48-57 age group have the highest intergenerational solidarity score, with 71 (39.70%) having scores between 61 and 70, and 91 (50.80%) having scores between 71 and 80. Meanwhile, 17 (9.5%) of the 179 respondents in the age group have the highest intergenerational solidarity score of 81-90. The least support for intergenerational solidarity is recorded in the 18-27 age bracket; though the reasons for their non-support may not be stated, a lack of understanding of the concept may be responsible because, in the long run, they should be the group that will benefit most from the integration of the two policies – top-down and bottom-up.

Research Question 2: What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on gender? Table 3 below answers this question.

Table 3. Levels of Support for intergenerational solidarity based on gender

			Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score			Total
			61-70	71-80	81-90	
Gender	Male	Count	52	65	17	134
		%	38.8%	48.5%	12.7%	100%
	Female	Count	63	79	0	142
		%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	100%
Total		Count	115	144	17	276
		%	41.7%	52.2%	6.2%	100%

Most females (79, 55.60%) have higher Intergenerational solidarity scores of 71-80 than their male counterparts (65, 48.0%). This may reflect men's desire to dominate decision-making in African society, where they believe the younger generation often

plays the role of observer. However, the males (17, 12.7%) have the highest intergenerational scores, ranging from 81 to 90.

Research Question 3: What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on fields of study? Table 4 answers the question.

Table 4. Levels of Intergenerational Solidarity Support Based on Fields of Study

Field of Study	Count	Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score			Total
		61-70	71-80	81-90	
		0	4	0	4
Science	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Count	50	59	7	116
	%	43.1%	50.9%	6.0%	100.0%
	Count	65	81	10	156
Non – Science	%	41.7%	51.9%	6.4%	100.0%
	Count	115	144	17	276
	%	41.7%	52.2%	6.2%	100.0%

From Table 4, more non-science respondents (81, 51.9%) have 71-80 intergenerational solidarity, while 59 (50.90%) are science respondents. The liberality of the non-science may be responsible for the acceptance of the intergenerational solidarity policy. Ten (10) (6.4%) of the non-science respondents have intergenerational solidarity scores between 81 and 90, which is higher than the 7 (6.00%) of their science counterparts.

Research Question 4: What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on religion? The results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Levels of Intergenerational Solidarity Support Based on Religion

Religion	Count	Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score			Total
		61-70	71-80	81-90	
		0	13	0	13
Christianity	%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Count	73	67	4	144
Islam	%	50.7%	46.5%	2.8%	100.0%
	Count	42	64	13	119
Total	%	35.3	53.8	10.9%	100.0%
	Count	115	144	17	276
	%	41.7%	52.2%	6.2%	100.0%

There are more Christians, 67 (46.5%), with 71-80 Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score than their Muslim counterparts, 64 (53.8%). However, there are more Muslims, 13 (10.90%), with 81-90 Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score than the 4 (2.8%) Christians.

Research Question 5: What are the levels of acceptability of intergenerational solidarity based on occupation?

Table 6. Levels of intergenerational solidarity based on occupation

Occupation			Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score			Total
			61-70	71-80	81-90	
	Civil Servant	Count	73	115	11	199
		%	36.7%	57.8%	5.5%	100.0%
	Non-Civil Servant	Count	18	20	6	44
		%	40.9%	45.5%	13.6%	100.0%
	Retirees	Count	24	9	0	33
		%	72.7%	27.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		115	144	17	276
	%		41.7%	52.2%	6.2%	100.0%

Table 6 indicates that most of the civil servants (115, 57.8%) have a moderately high Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score of 71-80, compared to 20 (45.5%) of their non-civil servant counterparts. In contrast, the retirees with 71-80 scores were just 9 (27.30%). Eleven (11) (5.5%) of the civil servants, 6 (13.6%) of the non-civil servants, and none of the retirees have an 81-90 Intergenerational Solidarity Group Score.

6. Prospects for Integrating Bottom-Top and Top-Bottom

Our system gives little or no consideration to the plight of the youth in formulating and implementing policies. The top-down system of developing, implementing, and evaluating policies—whether in education or other social activities—by older generations, with minimal consideration for the younger generation, must change. This change is necessary to create a world for all ages. How can any society develop policies that will affect a particular generation without involving it in the formulation and other processes? To drive home the importance of intergenerational solidarity, Bengtson and Oyama (2007) argued that “social cohesion between generations is

influenced by affectual, associational, consensual, functional, normative, and structural factors that operate at both the macro social level of society and groups” (p. 1). Intergenerational solidarity, therefore, can influence how resources are allocated across different sectors, such as healthcare, education, and housing, fostering a balanced distribution that benefits all age groups.

Exploring top-down and bottom-up approaches will improve the educational and other social systems when everyone participates at all levels. When policymakers prioritise intergenerational solidarity, they are more likely to design policies considering all age groups’ needs and perspectives. This leads to more equitable solutions that address the concerns of younger and older populations. It is also pertinent to note that when youths are involved at any level in formulating a policy, they are more committed to its success because they possess adequate mobilisation power. According to UNESCO (2016), participation at all levels must be guided by the principles of open, inclusive, and participatory policy dialogue, along with mutual accountability, transparency, and synergy” (p. 58); this is a prospect for integrating top-down and bottom-up policy.

Akanbi (2022) opines that ideas for developing and implementing policies should no longer be the exclusive preserve of older generations, especially regarding education, society’s general development, and welfare. The system for evaluating policies, their workings, and effectiveness is commonly older-generation-centred, especially in Africa. In contrast, youths are now relevant and robust stakeholders if the world expects meaningful and balanced development.

Evaluation of educational processes has also been a top-down affair. Often, the policy has been that teachers should evaluate students, but there should also be a policy, particularly in Nigeria, requiring students to evaluate teachers as well. This policy of bottom-top evaluation could maintain sanity in our higher institutions of learning, where some teachers have become semi-gods, doing whatever pleases them. Involving students in evaluating teachers’ performance and effectiveness will improve teaching and education in institutions of learning at all levels.

The world is witnessing an unprecedented technological feat by the younger generation, even as some older members cannot attend or host conferences online. It would be in the right place if such people became mentees for the versatile youths in the Field. Unfortunately, a top-down mentality will not allow such people to seek mentoring to improve their skills and boost the standard of education. Seeing

ourselves at the top without humbly accepting that we can improve by interacting with the bottom generation may spell doom for society.

Suppose there is genuineness in creating a world for all ages through intergenerational solidarity; it should reach a stage in our world where curriculum content must originate from the bottom before any input from the top. The bottom generation bears the brunt of failed educational content. Skills no longer relevant in the world of work are included in the curricula, leading youths to acquire irrelevant skills that fail to liberate them from the paper qualification syndrome, which takes them nowhere.

Delors' (1996) Commission proposed four pillars of education to “simultaneously provide maps of a world in constant turmoil and a compass that will enable people to find their way in it,” involving both old and young generations. They are *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together*, and *learning to be*. According to Sobe (2021), reworking the four pillars becomes necessary “to design meaningful learning experiences that develop the skills and competencies most needed in the present, for the futures we want to create” (para. 1). This aims to create a world for all ages. Sobe then expanded the pillars in the following ways:

- 1) Learning to know becomes “learning to study, inquire and co-construct together”. For this to be effective, intergenerational connection and solidarity are needed to reconstruct society and make it worth living for all. A single generation cannot co-construct; it must involve other generations.
- 2) Learning to do will work as “learning to mobilise collectively.” Collective mobilisation will involve all generations working together—top and bottom, old and young. Each age will be included; hence, intergenerational solidarity will emerge quickly, with everyone having a sense of belonging. More importantly, youths are more agile in mobilising to achieve any programme.
- 3) Learning to live together is crucial, reworking it as “learning to live in a common world”. Can we live together in harmony if a generation feels left out or oppressed? It is high time we realised, as suggested by Sobe (2021), that “tolerating and respecting the rights of others and the ways of being of others is a first step” (para. 8). The Younger generation cannot behave like the older generation. Still, they can key into society’s shared values, responsibilities, purposes, and objectives. It is therefore imperative to create a world for all ages by fostering intergenerational solidarity.

4) The fourth pillar, “learning to be”, emphasises personality development and the ability to take independent actions with correct judgment and personal responsibility. It sees education as supporting people’s freedom of thought, critical thinking, and the realisation of self-chosen purposes. With Sobe, it becomes “learning to attend and care,” helping us understand our capability and vulnerability simultaneously, forcing us to reflect on how we affect and are affected by others and the world. This consideration can only work when each generation is duly given its appropriate place in educational policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

In summary, intergenerational solidarity shapes the content of policies and the processes through which they are developed and implemented, promoting a more inclusive and sustainable approach to governance.

7. Conclusion

A summary of Howard Gardner’s *Five Minds for the Future* by Laburn (2011) is relevant in solidifying intergenerational solidarity. These minds equip each generation “to deal with what is expected, as well as what cannot be anticipated, in the future” (para. 3). They enable society to function as we commit to achieving intergenerational solidarity and creating a world for all ages. We all need to know what the five minds entail, as summarised below:

1. The disciplined mind applies diligently, improves steadily, and continues beyond formal education.
2. A synthesising mind - arrays information in ways that make sense to self and others.
3. Creating mind: This goes beyond existing knowledge and synthesis to pose new questions, offer solutions, and judge quality and acceptability.
4. The respectful mind - responds sympathetically and constructively to differences among individuals and groups, in this case, among different generations.
5. The ethical mind strives toward good work and good citizenship. This mindset will enable the older generation to recognise the necessity of giving space to the younger generation, fostering a solidarity that cannot be easily broken.

Also, using the *five minds for the future* in reframing the human dimension, Marsella (2017) submitted that “the consequences of not developing these minds for the future will be severe -spelling the difference between success and failure” (para. 43).

Therefore, networking between the top and the bottom, backed by legislation where possible, is imperative to avoid failing to create a world for all ages.

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