Great-grandparents in Comparison to Grandparents in Israel

Dr. Even-Zohar, Ahuva

Garby, Ayala (Tzurit)

School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Ariel university
ahuvaez@gmail.com

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The Purpose of the Study

The phenomenon of four-generation families has considerably grown in recent years.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role perception of great-grandparents (GrGp) and the meaning of their relationships with great-grandchildren (GrGc) for their quality of life compared to grandparents.

The meaning of Great-grandparents' role

Great-grandparents' role as a meaningless role: was not characterized by any rights or obligations (Barer, 2001; Mietkiewick & Venditti, 2004; Roberto & Skoglund, 1996)

Great-grandparents' role as an extension of the grandparent's role, and not as a new function (Drew & Wentowski, Silverstein, 2004; 1985)

Great-grandparents as a significant role: the continuance of the family, "mile-stone" - a mark of longevity (Doka & Mertz, 1988; Given-Reese & Beckmann-Murray, 1996; Walsh, 2012)

The styles of Great-grandparents' role

The formal-symbolic remote style: the relationships between GrGp and GrGc are enacted mainly on special occasions and holidays

The closest style: the relationships between GrGp and GrGc are frequent: the GrGp take them shopping and on trips, join in their leisure activities, and keep various toys and games in their homes to play together with them during the visits

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Socio-demographic Variables that Influence GrGp and GrGc Relationships

Age and health status
The advanced age of GrGp and chronic health conditions may create difficulties for them in mobility as well as extended stays at family events, such as holidays with the GrGc or hosting them.

Gender
Unlike the difficulty of defining great-grandfathers' role in practical terms, the practical role of great-grandmothers related to the tendency of women to take on the responsibility of maintaining family-member ties.

Economic status
GrGp with financial resources have more options for funding shared activities with GrGc.

Geographical distance
Geographical proximity enables or prevents frequent meetings with the GrGc, providing instrumental help, and creating emotional closeness / No correlation between geographical proximity and the quality of relationships between GrGp and GrGc, even if residing in close proximity.

The effect of middle generations
The relationships between GrGp and GrGc are mediated by the two intermediate generations, i.e., grandparents and parents, who are actually a kind of "gate-keepers".

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Method – The sample and the Procedure

The sample included 103 great-grandparents (the study group) and 111 grandparents (the comparison group).

After receiving approval of the Ethics Committee of the university **the great-grandparents** were identified through an appeal to managers of clubs and day centers for the older persons. Confidentiality and anonymity were emphasized, and after they signed informed consent forms, they filled out the questionnaires in face-to-face meetings. **The grandparents**, were identified through social networks and forums. A grandparent who agreed to participate in the study received a link to an online questionnaire, and sent it back after filling it out.

Study Sample

Variable	Characteristics	GrGp (N=103)		Grandparents (N=111)	
		N (%)	Mean (SD)	N (%)	Mean (SD)
Age			81.9 (5.57)		62.6 (6.56)
Gender	Men Women	24 (23.3) 79(76.7)		24 (21.6) 87 (78.4)	
Marital status	Married Unmarried	43 (41.7) 60 (58.3)		99 (89.2) 12 (10.8)	
Economic status	Good Medium Poor	64 (62.1) 34 (33.0) 5 (4.9)		73(68.9) 32 (30.2) 1 (0.9)	
Health status	Very good Good Satisfactory Poor	4 (3.9) 28 (27.2) 44 (42.7) 27 (26.2)		36 (33.3) 42 (38.9) 27 (25.0) 3 (2.8)	
Transportation options to grandchildren/GrGc	Difficult Medium Convenient	45 (45.9) 28 (28.5) 25 (25.6)		11 (10.0) 26 (23.7) 73 (66.3)	

Measures

1. *The Multidimensional Experience of Grandparenthood Set of Inventories- MEG* (Findler, et al., 2013). It consists of 77 items and contains four **dimensions**:

The cognitive dimension - two factors: Personal investment, Personal cost.

The affective dimension - two factors: Positive emotions, Negative emotions.

The symbolic dimension - four factors: Meaning, Compensation for parenthood, Continuity, Burden.

The behavioral dimension - three factors: Emotional support, Contribution to upbringing, Instrumental support.

α=0.78 - 0.90.

Measures

2. *Quality of Life questionnaire* (The WHOQOL Group, 1998) - self-reported subjective perception of people about their quality of life.

The questionnaire measures four domains:

Physical health; Psychological health; Social relationships; Environment

α=0.94.

In addition, we added the question: 'How does being a great-grandparent /grandparent contribute to your quality of life?'.

3. *Demographic questionnaire* - gender, age, marital status, education level, religious level, economic status, health status, and transportation options.

The Research Hypotheses

1. **The perception of the role of GrGp would be different from that of grandparents in the following dimensions:**

1.1. The symbolic dimension - the factors: meaning, compensation for parenthood, and burden among GrGp will be lower than among grandparents; continuity will be higher among GrGp than among grandparents.
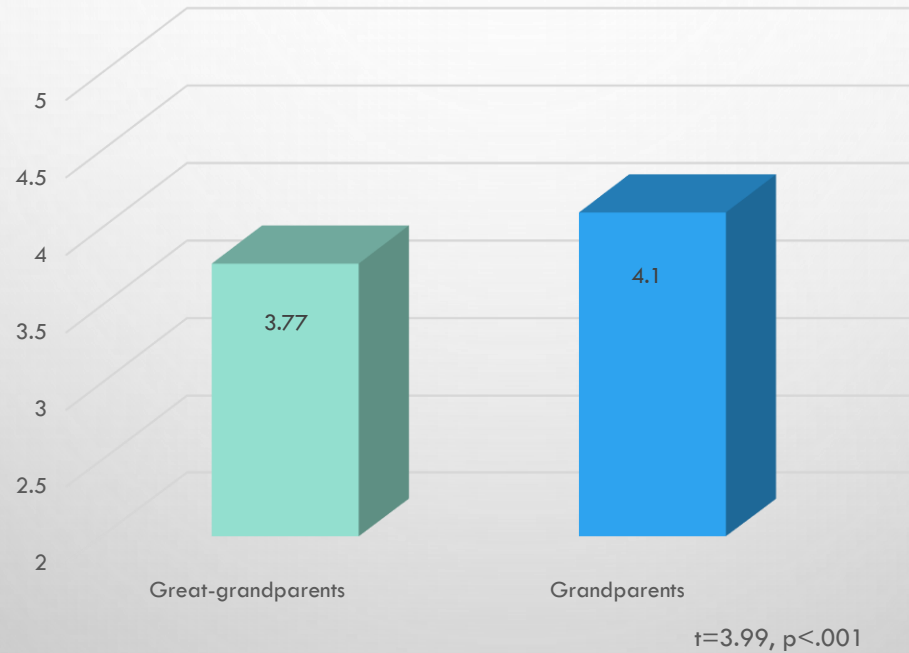
1.2. The cognitive dimension - the factors: personal investment and personal cost will be lower among GrGp than among grandparents.

1.3. The affective dimension - the factors: positive emotions and negative emotions will both be lower among GrGp than among grandparents.

1.4. The behavioral dimension - the factors: instrumental support, emotional support, and contribution to upbringing will be lower among GrGp than among grandparents.
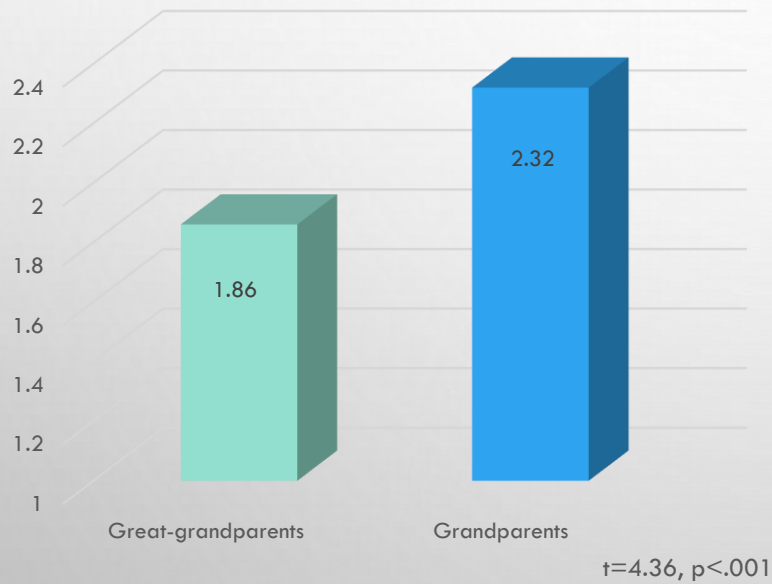
Results – The symbolic dimension

Meaning

t=3.99, p<.001

Results - The cognitive dimension

Personal cost

2.4	
2.2	2.32
2	
1.8	1.86
1.6	
1.4	
1.2	
1	

Great-grandparents   Grandparents

t=4.36, p<.001

Personal investment

4	
3.5	3.85
3	3.28
2.5	
2	
1.5	
1	

Great-grandparents   Grandparents

t=5.19, p<.001

12
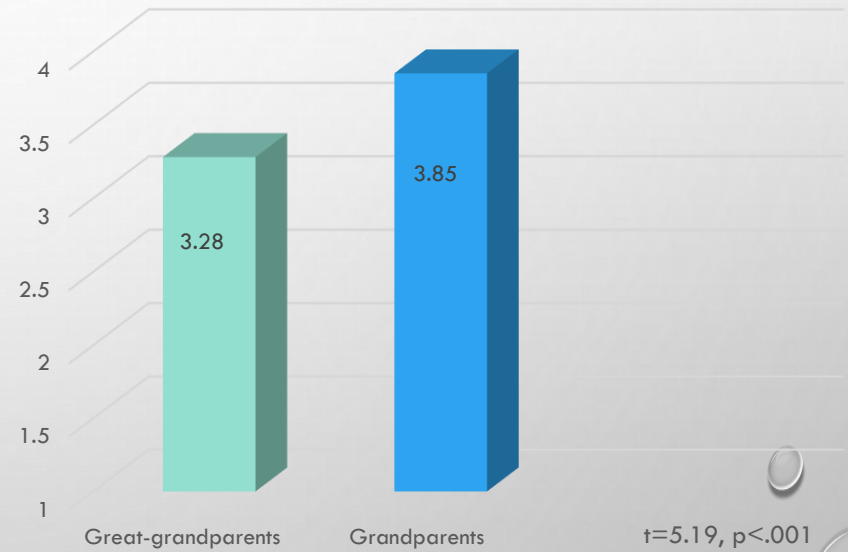
Results – The affective dimension

Positive emotions

t=3.40, p<.001
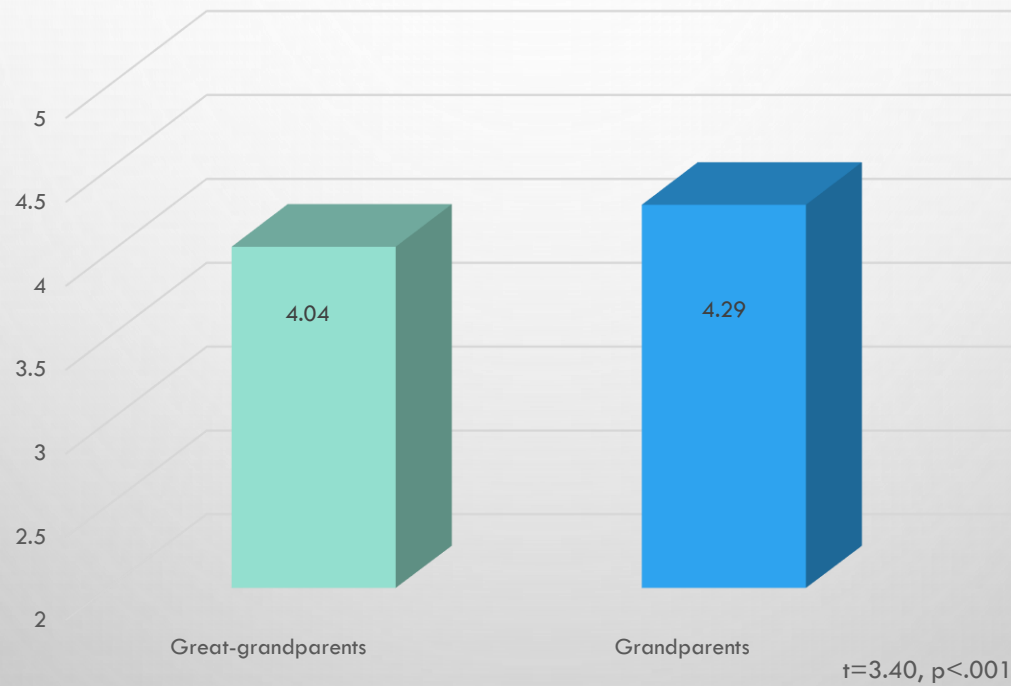
Results – The behavioral dimension

Instrumental support

5	
4.5	
4	
3.5	3.29
3	
2.5	
2	
1.5	1.67
1	

Great-grandparents   Grandparents
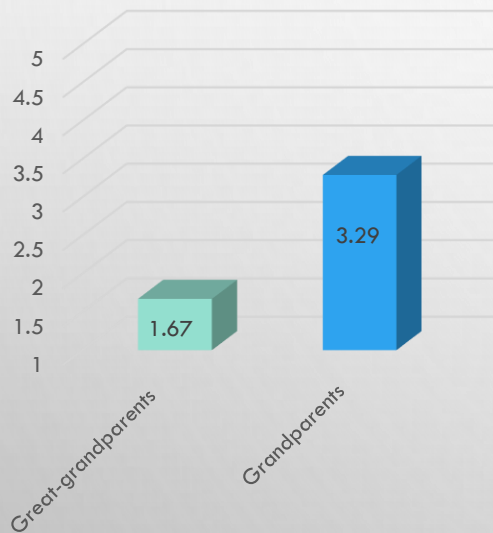
t=13.35, p<.001

Emotional support

5	
4.5	4.07
4	
3.5	3.46
3	
2.5	
2	
1.5	
1	

Great-grandparents   Grandparents
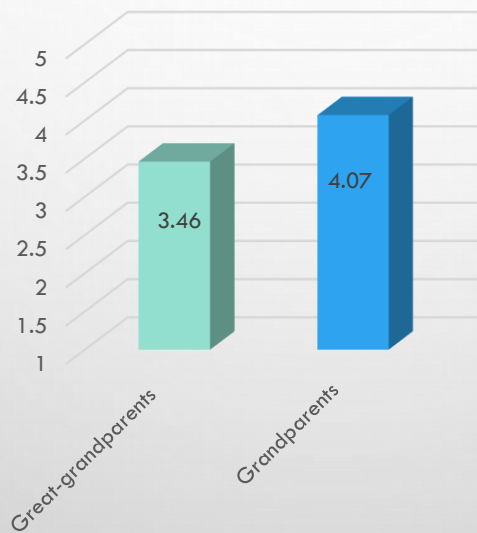
t=6.61,p<.001

Contribution to upbringing

5	
4.5	
4	
3.5	3.48
3	
2.5	2.32
2	
1.5	
1	

Great-grandparents   Grandparents

t=10.11, p<.001

14
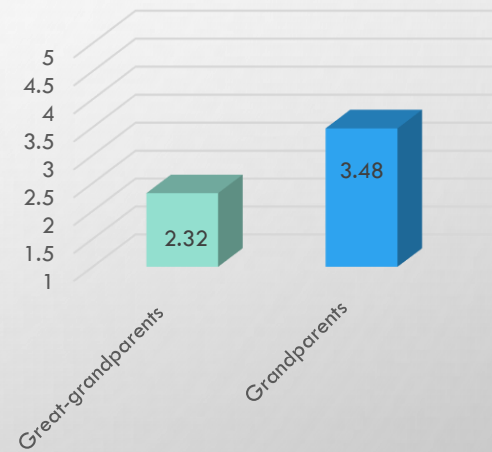
Differences between the two Groups - Controlling Variables

In addition, to examine whether there were differences between the two groups in the grandparenting role dimensions, when controlling for the age, gender, economic status, health status, religious level, education, and transportation options to grandchildren/GrGc variables, a Univariate Analysis of Variance with Covariate was conducted.

Results revealed that when the two variables **age** and **health** were covariate, there were no significant differences between grandparents and GrGp (except of contribution to upbringing factor of the behavioral dimension).

The Research Hypothesis

2. As the perception of grandparenthood's role is higher - the quality of life of GrGp and grandparents would be higher.

Correlations between Quality of Life and the Dimensions of Grandparenthood among Great-grandparents (N=103) and Grandparents (N=111)

		Total quality of life (the average of the total items of the questionnaire)	
		Great-grandparents	Grandparents
Dimension	**Factor**		
Symbolic	**Meaning**	-.09	-.04
	Compensation for parenthood	-.01	-.00
	Continuity	-.01	.17
	Burden	-.12	-.25**
Cognitive	**Personal investment**	-.02	.02
	Personal cost	-.16	-.17
Affective	**Positive emotions**	.17	.25**
	Negative emotions	-.30**	-.24*
Behavioral	**Emotional support**	.22*	.21*
	Instrumental support	.21*	-.14
	Contribution to upbringing	.33**	.21**

*p<.05, **p<.01

Correlations between Quality of Life and being Great-grandparents (N=103), and Grandparents (N=111)

		'How does being a great-grandparent /grandparent contribute to your quality of life?'	
		Great-grandparents	Grandparents
Dimension	Factor		
Symbolic	Meaning	.41***	.48***
	Compensation for parenthood	.20*	.16
	Continuity	.25**	.26**
	Burden	.16	-.22*
Cognitive	Personal investment	.53***	.43***
	Personal cost	.20*	-.08
Affective	Positive emotions	.51***	.42***
	Negative emotions	-.12	-.09
Behavioral	Emotional support	.38***	.54***
	Instrumental support	.20**	.31***
	Contribution to upbringing	.39***	.40***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The symbolic dimension

The meaning factor: The higher the meaning factor was, the higher the quality of life of GrGp, and grandparents was.

The continuity factor: The higher the continuity of the family was, the higher the quality of life of GrGp, and grandparent was.

"When I announced the birth of my first great-granddaughter, I thought: I won…I had feelings of winning and excitement. I felt I was here!! I have continued, every person wants to leave their mark and I have left a lot"; To be a great-grandfather is a privilege that gives longevity and happiness - there is no substitute".

The Cognitive Dimension

The personal investment factor: The higher the GrGp and grandparents more invest in their role, the higher the quality of life of GrGp, and grandparents was.

The personal cost factor: Positive correlation was found between personal cost and quality of life only among GrGp.

"I am happy to give up my class so I can baby-sit for my great-grandson".

The Affective Dimension

The positive emotions factor: The more the GrGp and the grandparents felt positive feelings toward GrGc/grandchildren the higher their quality of life was.

The negative emotions factor: The more the GrGp and the grandparents felt negative feelings toward GrGc/grandchildren, their quality of life has been reduced.

"My total quality of life is bad because my wife is sick. If I had no great-grandchildren, my life would not be worthwhile".

The Behavioral Dimension

The more the GrGp and the grandparents supported their GrGc/grandchildren in all three factors (emotional support, instrumental support, and contribution to upbringing) the higher their quality of life was.

"I'm enjoying life because of the connections and activities with my great-grandchildren".

"They're afraid to take advantage of us and I justify them. I don't always have strength, yet I always want to do something, and I want them to ask me if I can, and not to decide for themselves"

"I would like to prepare food for them but I am too old so I buy food for them."

The research question

Which socio-demographic variables are related to the role as reflected in the GrGp' and grandparents' actual behavior?

The dependent variable – behavioral dimension – consists of the average of three factors: instrumental support, emotional support and contribution to upbringing.

Stepwise Regression analysis models were conducted.

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Stepwise Regression predicting behavioral dimension							
Group		Variable	B	SE B	b	t	R^2
GrGp							
	Step 1	Marital status	-.36	.13	-.27	-2.67***	.074
	Step 2	Marital status	-.35	.13	-.26	-2.69**	.126
		Number of GrGc	.01	.00	.22	2.30*	
	Step 3	Marital status	-.46	.13	-.34	-3.34***	.171
		Number of GrGc	-.01	.00	.22	2.31*	
		Gender	.35	.16	.22	2.19*	
	Step 4	Marital status	-.42	.13	-.31	-3.13***	.216
		Number of GrGc	.01	.00	.22	2.35*	
		Gender	.42	.16	.27	2.64*	
		Transportation options	.17	.80	.22	2.22*	
Grandparents							
	Step 1	Gender	.64	.16	.37	3.97***	.144
	Step 2	Gender	.59	.15	.34	3.76***	.211
		Economic status	.39	.13	.26	2.80**	

***P<.001,   **p<.01,   *p<.05

Great-grandparents

GrGp who were women, married, had more GrGc, and had options of convenient transport to their GrGc, had more active interaction with them.

The total percentage of explained variance was 21.6%.

Grandparents

Grandparents who were women and had a good economic status, had more active interaction with their grandchildren.

The total percentage of explained variance was 21.1%.

The research question

Which are the predictor variables of total quality of life of GrGp and grandparents?

Stepwise Regression analysis models were conducted. The regression model introduced socio-demographic characteristics, as well as variables related to the eleven-dimensional factors of grandparenthood.

| Stepwise regression predicting total quality of life							
		Factors	B	SE B	b	t	R^2
GrGp							
	Step 1	Health status	-.49	.05	-.64	-8.30***	.413
	Step 2	Health status	-.40	.05	-.52	-6.94***	.516
		Economic status	-.37	.08	-.34	-4.54***	
	Step 3	Health status	-.36	.05	-.47	-6.39***	.564
		Economic status	-.30	.08	-.28	-3.76***	
		Education	.18	.05	.23	3.24***	
	Step 4	Health status	-.36	.05	-.48	-6.93***	.618
		Economic status	-.30	.07	-.27	-3.99***	
		Education	.20	.05	.25	3.72***	
		Positive emotions	.24	.06	.23	3.68***	
Grandparents							
	Step 1	Health status	-.34	.04	-.59	-7.11***	.350
	Step 2	Health status	-.32	.04	-.54	-6.80***	.418
		Economic status	-.28	.08	-.26	-3.28***	
	Step 3	Health status	-.30	.04	-.51	-6.71***	.478
		Economic status	-.33	.08	-.30	-3.96***	
		Emotional support	.19	.06	.25	3.26***	
	Step 4	Health status	-.28	.04	-.49	-6.64***	.530
		Economic status	-.23	.08	-.21	-2.69**	
		Emotional support	.35	.07	.45	4.65***	
		Instrumental support	-.16	.05	-.327	-3.163***	
	Step 5	Health status	-.28	.04	-.47	-6.61***	.563
		Economic status	-.23	.08	-.21	-2.82**	
		Emotional support	.22	.09	.28	2.49*	
		Instrumental support	-.22	.05	-.44	-4.03***	
		Contribution to upbringing	.21	.08	.31	2.61*	
	Step 6	Health status	-.28	.04	-.48	-.6.83***	.585
		Economic status	-.22	.08	-20	-2.76**	
		Emotional support	.19	.08	.24	2.12*	
		Instrumental support	-.21	.05	-.41	-3.81***	
		Contribution to upbringing	.23	.08	.34	2.89**	
		Personal cost	-.09	.04	-.15	-2.16*	

***P<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Great-grandparents

Good health, good economic status, better education, and feeling more positive emotions toward GrGc contributed to the total quality of life of GrGp.
The total percentage of explained variance was 61.8%.

Grandparents

Good health, good economic status, providing emotional support and instrumental support, contribution to upbringing for the grandchildren, and feeling less personal cost in their role as grandparents contributed to their total quality of life. The total percentage of explained variance was 58.5%.

A Model of the Relations between the Dimensions of the Great-grandparenting Role

Chi Square = 8.394 (DF = 15) p = .907
nfi = .970 cfi = 1.000 RMSEA = .000
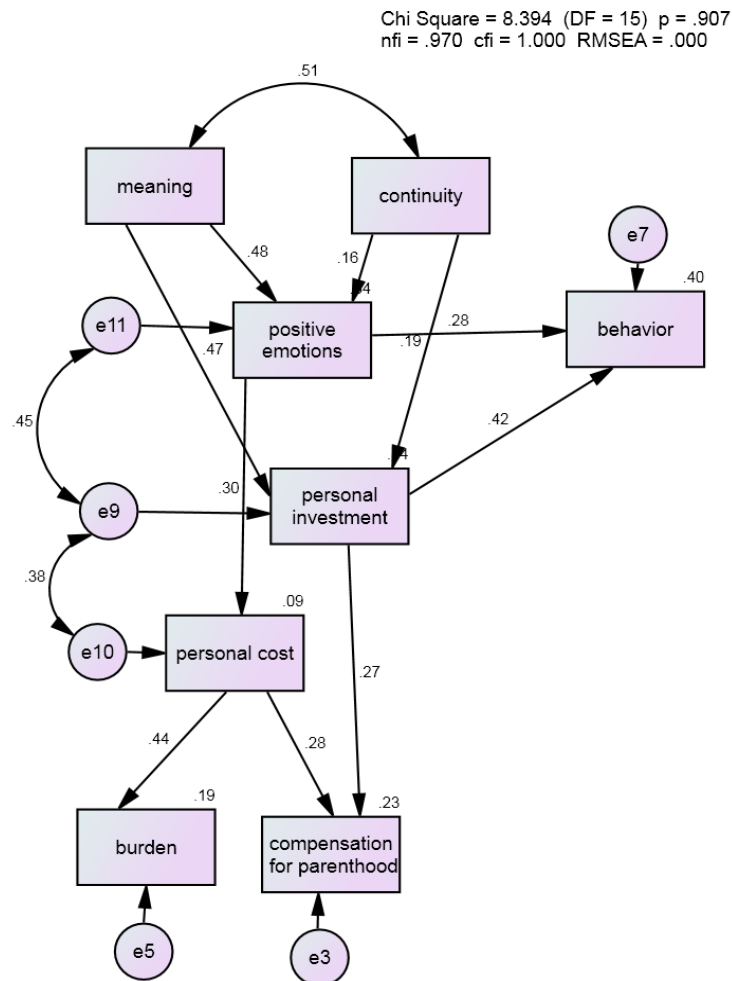
The model indicates that the continuity and meaning factors of the symbolic dimension were predictors of personal investment of the cognitive dimension and of positive emotions of the affective dimension. **These factors predicted the behavioral dimension, that is, the actual help of GrGp to their GrGc.** In addition, the positive emotions factor also predicted the personal cost' factor. Personal cost and personal investment factors, which belong to the cognitive dimension, predict the compensation for parenthood factors which belong to the symbolic dimension.

The methodological Limitations of the Research

1. The sample was a convenience sample and therefore it was not representative.
2. The questionnaires were filled out differently in the study group (face-to-face interview) and in the comparison group (an internet interview).

Conclusions and Implications

1. To the best of our knowledge this is the first study conducted on GrGp in Israel.

2. Research results indicating that the role of GrGp in helping their GrGc contributed to their quality of life, highlight the need to encourage direct relationships between the generations of GrGp and GrGc.

3. Since this population continues to grow, it would be worthwhile to expand the research study, for example, to a four-generation study which includes: GrGp , grandparents, grandchildren and GrGc of the same families.

Thank you for your attention!