

# First-Time Grandparenting: A Cross-Sectional Study on the Benefits and Challenges Among Three Age Groups (50-70 Years And Above)

Dr. Kamini Prakash Rege<sup>1</sup>, Lydia Samuel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor. Department of Human Development. College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan, Affiliated to University of Mumbai, India

<sup>2</sup>Master's Program Research student, Department of Human Development, College of Home Science, Nirmala Niketan, Affiliated to University of Mumbai, India

## Abstract

Transitioning to grandparenthood is one the major changes in an individual's life. (Brotherson.2020) has defined grandparenting as "typically occurring when a person has reached maturity and has wisdom or experience to share with the rising generation. The study aimed to understand the opinions of first-time grandparents (50-60,60-70,71 and above years) on benefits, challenges, and coping strategies of first time grandparenting. It involved 180 first time grandparents from Mumbai. Self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data. Findings indicated that benefits experienced by first time grandparents were majority joy and happiness by spending time with their grandchild (55%), playing and having fun, going to the park together which helps to keep them physically and mentally active. Many first time grandparents (57%) indicated that adapting to changes in cultural norms such as understanding and respecting new parenting approaches or values that may differ from those when you were raising your own children was challenging, While gathering insights on suggestions/strategies for future grandparents majority of the little less than half of the grandfathers (48.8%) responded that by being there to help, but not over taking such as offering to do homework, but allowing your grandchild to take the lead and asking for help when needed will help in grandparenting and majority of grandmothers (60%) responded that communicating openly, listening well can lead to successful grandparenting. Based on the findings, guidelines/ brochures for enhancing the role of being first time grandparents were developed. These guidelines can therefore be effective. Communicated to the future first time grandparents, the research participants and in religious places, ngos working with elderly and most importantly in hospitals.

**Keywords:** First time grandparents, transition, benefits of first time grandparenting, challenges of first time grandparenting

## 1. Introduction

Grandparents, like heroes, are necessary to a child's growth as vitamins -Allston Brotherson, & Langerud in their article 'The Art of Grandparenting No.1: Becoming a Grandparent' defined grandparenting typically occurs when a person has reached maturity and has wisdom or experience to share with the rising generation (Brotherson,2020). According to Chadha's (2010) paper 'Intergenerational relationships: an Indian perspective,' living with grandparents is not a duty in the Indian culture, but rather a necessity

because it allows for the general development of the children in the family. The elder lies' experience, caring, and nurturing make the children far more aware of the positives around them. It helps children comprehend that as time passes, value systems deteriorate, and that these deteriorated value systems have caused so much harm to our society. For the elderly people, it is a positive opportunity to find meaning in their lives in Indian context, one good factor is that the retired men and women have a whole new bunch of roles to play. They still have their roots in the family. Developing connections with a younger generation helps older adults to feel a greater sense of fulfilment. In fact, it is advantageous for both the groups as on one hand it helps the elderly transfer whatever they have achieved emotionally and socially in their entire life and on the other hand the kids gets multiple perspectives on reality which makes them more socially adjusted. In spite of their own health problems, the elders manage to take care of the younger ones at a good level. Indian grandparents teach their grandchildren practical abilities and provide them with information about their family and their past. They also provide them with care and support, and act as role models and sources of ideas and reflection about human life. As agents of their grandchildren's socialization, grandparents are significant and contribute to their cognitive, moral and socio-affective development. This creates a close relationship between children's development and the roles played by their grandparents within the web of family relationships. It is been seen in the Indian culture that advice, education and reflection are more frequently attributed to grandfathers while affectionate relationships and care are attributed to grandmother's. Vishnupriya (2002) says grandparents can often neglect their own health in favor of their grandchildren, particularly if money is an issue. Challenges that grandparents may face when they become involved in their grandchild's life. Some of these challenges include balancing your time between your grandchild and your other responsibilities, dealing with difficult behaviour from the child, coping with changes in the family dynamic.

### **Research objectives**

1. To ascertain the opinion from first time grandparents in relation to benefits and challenges experienced as first time grandparents
2. To create guidelines/ brochures for enhancing the role of being first time grandparents.

### **2. Research Methodology**

**Research design** used in the study was exploratory research design. Exploratory research is research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon.

**Sample size-** 180 first time grandparents

- 60 grandparents of 50-60 years old, where 30 were female grandparents and 30 were male grandparents
- 60 grandparents of 61-70 years old, where 30 were female grandparents and 30 were male grandparents
- 60 grandparents of 70 and above years old, where 30 were female grandparents and 30 were male grandparents

### **Sampling techniques:**

#### **1. Snowball Sampling technique-**

Rationale -Because it broadened the distribution of questionnaires to a larger group of individuals.

#### **2. Purposive Sampling technique**

Rationale- Because it helped in selecting specific individuals or cases that possess certain characteristics relevant to the research question.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion criteria**

The key features of the target population that the investigators will use to answer their research question.

In this research it was as follows:

1. Grandparent who had his /her grandchild between the age of 3-8 years were included
2. Grandparents who lived with their own son, own daughter or independently were included
3. Grandparents from different socio-economic background were included
4. Anybody who was a second time grandparent and grandparents who resided in old age homes were excluded

**Research process and development of tool:** The researchers have developed a self-constructed semi structured questionnaire for the study. The proforma was based on the inclusion as well as exclusion criteria of the study. The selfconstructed questionnaire contained 6 multiple choice question and 1 open ended question.

**Plan of Analysis:** Data was analysed quantitatively wherein frequency and percentages were drawn and tabulated. Total 180 participants (90 first time grandfathers,90 first time grandmothers) across Mumbai and nearby districts, were contacted and the study was conducted from the Indian population. Results obtained from the 180 participants (90 first time grandfathers,90 first time grandmothers) have been computed.

### 3. Result and Discussion

**Objective 1.** To ascertain the opinion from first time grandparents in relation to benefits and challenges experienced as first-time grandparents

**Table No.1: Benefits experienced by first time grandparents (n=180)**

Benefits of first time grandparenting	Male (n=90)		Female (n=90)		Grand total (n=180)	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
	Joy and happiness by spending time with your grandchild, seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter, brings immense joy	33	36.6	66	73.3	99
Sharing life lessons by teaching them things like how to tie their shoes, ride a bike	48	53.3	43	47.7	91	50.5
Playing and having fun by engaging in activities like playing games, doing puzzles, or going to the park together.	45	50	47	52.2	92	51.1
Passing down family traditions by celebrating holidays, preparing special family recipe	29	32.2	35	38.8	64	35.5
Staying mentally active by solving puzzles, reading stories, or engaging in educational activities with your grandchild.	33	36.6	25	27.7	58	32.2
Finding a new sense of purpose by being there to nurture and guide your grandchild	33	36.6	21	23.3	54	30

Note -\*Multiple responses were obtained

In response to the benefits of first time grandparenting little more than half of the grandfathers (53.3%) indicated that by sharing life lessons such as teaching them things like how to tie their shoes, ride a bike benefits them and large majority of grandmothers (73.3%) indicated that there is joy and happiness by spending time with their grandchild, seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter, brings immense joy, however little more than half of the grandmothers (52.2%) stated that by playing and having fun by engaging in activities like playing games, doing puzzles, or going to the park together also is a benefit of grandparenting (Refer to table.no 1).

**Table No.2: Challenges experienced as a first-time grandparent (n=180)**

Challenges as a first time grandparent	Total				Grand total	
	Male (n=90)		Female (n=90)		All age group (n=180)	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Neglect health in favor of grandchildren such as disturbing sleep schedule, skipping medicines	26	28.8	49	54.4	75	41.6
New roles and responsibilities like adjusting to being a supportive figure rather than the primary caregiver	38	42.2	45	50	83	46.1
Adapting to changes in cultural norms such as understanding and respecting new parenting approaches or values that may differ from those when you were raising your own children	51	56.6	51	56.6	102	56.6
Long-distance between grandchild and me which makes it difficult to spend time together	29	32.2	32	35.5	61	33.8
Family conflict if the parents disagree on how to discipline the child leading to confusion and tension	26	28.8	27	30	53	29.4
Financially not independent to satisfy grandchild's needs	25	27.7	32	35.5	57	31.6
Not able to give same energy as of grandchildren	21	23.3	29	32.2	50	27.7
Balancing time with other responsibilities such as work	25	27.7	27	30	52	28.8

Note-\*Multiple responses were obtained

In response to the challenges of first time grandparenting more of the grandparents [Male (56.6%);Female (56.6%)] indicated that adapting to changes in cultural norms such as understanding and respecting new parenting approaches or values that may differ from those when you were raising your own children was challenging, however little more than half of the grandmothers (54.4%) indicated that neglecting health in favor of grandchildren such as disturbing sleep schedule, skipping medicines was also a challenge (Refer to table.no 2).

**Table No.3: Strategies suggested by first time grandparents for future first time grandparents (n=180)**

Suggestions/strategies for those who would be first time grandparents	Total		Grand total	
	Male (n=90)	Female (n=90)	All age group (n=180)	
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	
Communicate openly, listen well by asking your grandchild about their day at school, listening to stories	40 94	44.4 <b>52.2</b>	54	<b>60</b>
Respect parents' rules and decisions such as if the parents have set a bedtime, make sure to follow it when the grandchildren are in your care.	43 77	47.7 42.7	34	37.7
Be there to help, but don't take over such as offering to do homework, but allow your grandchild to take the lead and ask for help when needed.	44 79	<b>48.8</b> 43.8	35	38.8
Spend quality time together	44 84	<b>48.8</b> 46.6	40	44.4
Share family stories and values	38 75	42.2 41.6	37	41.1
Learn about what interests your grandchild such as ask about their favorite books, hobbies	23 42	25.5 23.3	19	21.1
Be flexible and adapt as your grandchild grows because as they get older, their interests and preferences may change, so be open to trying new activities together	29 59	32.2 32.7	30	33.3
Set a good example with kindness and respect.	32 63	35.5 35	31	34.4

Note -\*Multiple responses were obtained

While gathering insights on suggestions/strategies for future grandparents majority of the little less than half of the grandfathers (48.8%) responded that by being there to help, but not over taking such as offering to do homework, but allowing your grandchild to take the lead and asking for help when needed will help in grandparenting also they stated (48.8%) that sharing quality time together and majority of grandmothers (60%) responded that communicating openly, listening well by asking your grandchild about their day at school, listening to stories will lead to successful grandparenting (Refer to table.no 3).

**Objective 2** To create guidelines/ brochures for enhancing the role of being first time grandparents (refer to figure no.1 and 2).

**Figure No.1: Brochure page 1**

### TIPS FOR FIRST TIME GRANDPARENTING

1. Offer Advice If Asked  
One of the hardest things about being a grandparent is knowing when to offer advice and when to bite your tongue. It can be tempting to want to share your wisdom and parenting styles with your children and grandchildren but resist the urge. 
2. Stick to their rules —Have mutual respect to the parenting style of your child and follow their rules when you're around the grandchild. 
3. Spend fun time together: Go out and do things you both enjoy, like playing games or reading stories.
4. Learn what they like: Find out what your grandchild loves to do and learn about it so you can join in the fun. 
5. Be flexible: Be ready to change your plans or approach as your grandchild grows and their needs change.

6. Be nice and polite: Show good manners to your grandchild and treat them with kindness and respect. 
7. Give gentle advice: Share your wisdom with your grandchild in a nice way, without being bossy.
8. Be there for big moments: Show up for important events and be supportive during tough times of your grandchild 
9. Take care of yourselves: Don't forget about your own health! Make sure to take care of yourselves so you can be there for your grandchild for a long time. 

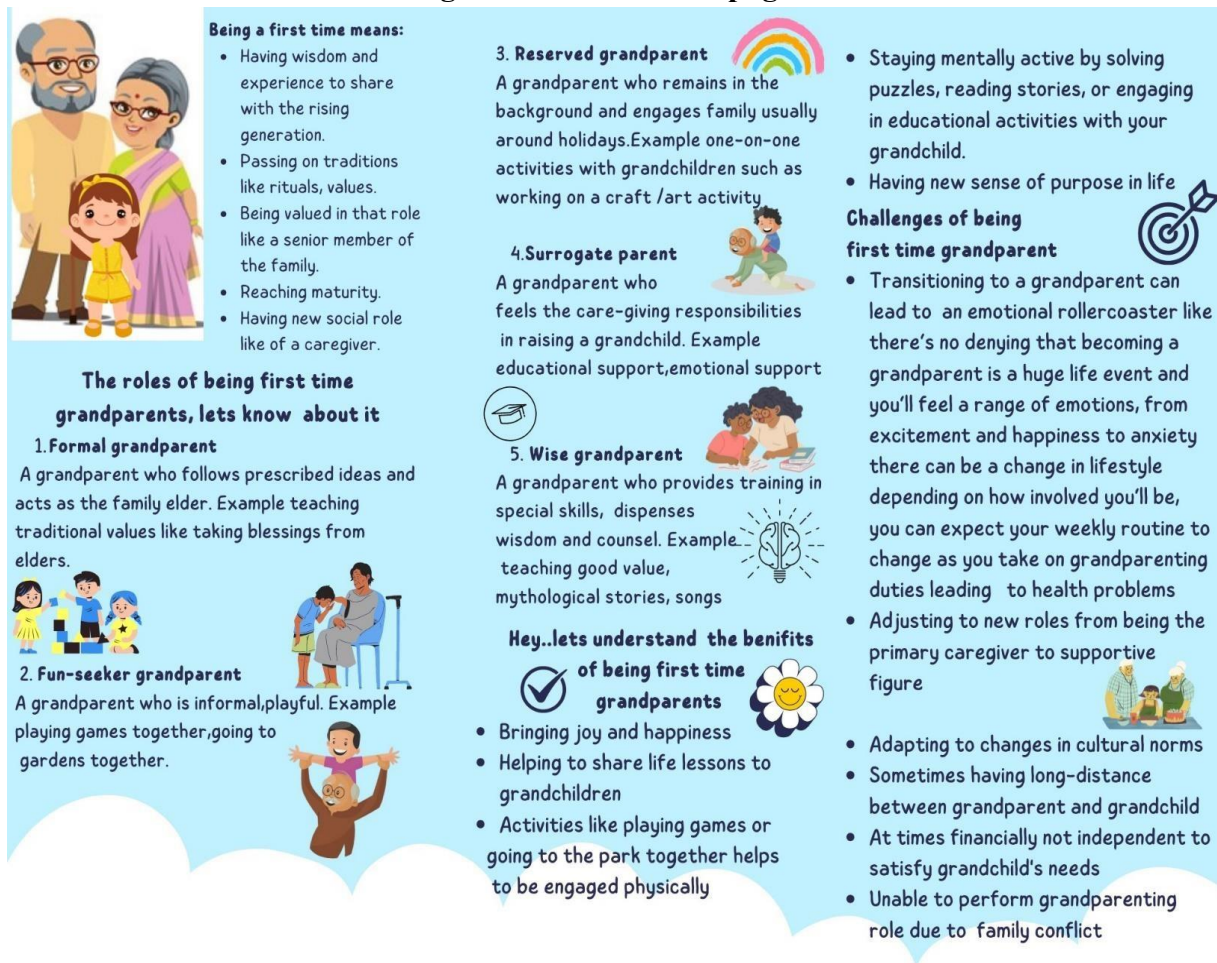


## "First-Time Grandparents: Navigating Life's Grand Shift"



Designed & Created by  
Lydia Samuel (MSc II HD)  
Under the guidance of  
Prof. Dr. Kamini Rege  
Department of Human Development,  
College of Home Science Nirmala  
Niketan,  
Affiliated to University of Mumbai,  
India

Figure No.2: Brochure page 2



**Being a first time means:**

- Having wisdom and experience to share with the rising generation.
- Passing on traditions like rituals, values.
- Being valued in that role like a senior member of the family.
- Reaching maturity.
- Having new social role like of a caregiver.

**The roles of being first time grandparents, lets know about it**

**1. Formal grandparent**  
A grandparent who follows prescribed ideas and acts as the family elder. Example teaching traditional values like taking blessings from elders.

**2. Fun-seeker grandparent**  
A grandparent who is informal, playful. Example playing games together, going to gardens together.

**3. Reserved grandparent**  
A grandparent who remains in the background and engages family usually around holidays. Example one-on-one activities with grandchildren such as working on a craft /art activity.

**4. Surrogate parent**  
A grandparent who feels the care-giving responsibilities in raising a grandchild. Example educational support, emotional support.

**5. Wise grandparent**  
A grandparent who provides training in special skills, dispenses wisdom and counsel. Example teaching good value, mythological stories, songs.

**Key..lets understand the benefits of being first time grandparents**

- Bringing joy and happiness
- Helping to share life lessons to grandchildren
- Activities like playing games or going to the park together helps to be engaged physically
- Staying mentally active by solving puzzles, reading stories, or engaging in educational activities with your grandchild.
- Having new sense of purpose in life

**Challenges of being first time grandparent**

- Transitioning to a grandparent can lead to an emotional rollercoaster like there's no denying that becoming a grandparent is a huge life event and you'll feel a range of emotions, from excitement and happiness to anxiety there can be a change in lifestyle depending on how involved you'll be, you can expect your weekly routine to change as you take on grandparenting duties leading to health problems
- Adjusting to new roles from being the primary caregiver to supportive figure
- Adapting to changes in cultural norms
- Sometimes having long-distance between grandparent and grandchild
- At times financially not independent to satisfy grandchild's needs
- Unable to perform grandparenting role due to family conflict

## Discussion

Grandmothers stated that by playing and engaging in activities like playing games, doing puzzles, or going to the park together also was benefit physical and mental health (Suitor,2016) also says that physical impacts may be positive in that due to grandchild care often led to increase in exercise, healthier diets, and a commitment to setting a good example. Highest challenges among grandparents were adapting to changes in cultural norms such as understanding and respecting new parenting approaches or values that may differ from those when the grandparents were raising their own children furthermore in the review of literature it was mentioned that the ideology of the modern generation, their thinking, social adaptability and style quotients are widely different as compared to their pedigree (Shlomo,2013).The study indicated that grandparents neglect their health in favor of grandchildren such as disturbing sleep schedules, skipping medicines similarly (Brotherson,2020) says that grandparents can often neglect their own health in favor of their grandchildren. Also (Martin,2020) said grandparents had a range of serious health conditions, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, impact to their chronic health conditions had on raising a grandchild. They expressed feeling exhausted, trying to balance caring for their grandchildren. Grandparents of 50-60 years old who were working had no challenges of energy as compared to 60–70-year-old grandparents and 71 and above year old grandparents also Sheppard (2019) in his study ‘Becoming a First-Time Grandparent and Subjective Well-Being: A Fixed Effects Approach’ says said that employed men reported higher levels of expected longevity upon becoming a grandfather, whereas

those not working (retired or otherwise) reported a decrease in expected longevity after the arrival of the grandchild.

#### 4. Contribution of the study

1. The major contribution of this study was to create guidelines/ brochures for enhancing the role of being first time grandparents. These guidelines were created on the basis of the suggestions and strategies given by the first-time grandparents. These guidelines can therefore be effectively communicated to the future first time grandparents, the research participants and in religious places, NGOs working with elderly and most importantly in hospitals.
2. The study indicates that neglecting health is one of the major challenges faced by first time grandparents. Therefore, awareness about the same can be done for future first time grandparents.
3. The study had variations of major three different cultures (Christian, Hindu, Muslim) which indicates multicultural perspective on first time grandparenting. This information can be kept in for future researches

#### 5. Recommendation for the future research

1. The current research has focused on ascertaining the opinion of first time grandparents across the age group of 50-70 and above years in relation to benefits and challenges and coping strategies of grandparents, suggestion for enhancing grandparenting style. Further research can ascertain the perception of parents in relation to first time grandparenting and their benefits and challenges and coping strategies.
2. This research focused on the semi-structured questionnaire. Further research could include other sources to obtain information (i.e. face to face interview method where observations help to crosscheck the information obtained) as it offers data that the respondents are unable/unwilling to cooperate/reveal, approaching reality in its natural structure and studies events as they evolve.
3. The current research focused on individuals who had proficiency in English language. Further researches could develop the questionnaire in multiple languages.
4. The further research could study the perceptions and inter-relationship regarding the other variables such as, (a) type of family (b) marital status (c) education background (d) income level (e) socio-economic status of first time grandparents across the three age groups (50- 60,61-70,71 and above)
5. The current study has selected participants only from Mumbai mainly, to get a better perspective large number of participants from within state, interstate and country wide could be considered.

#### 6. References

1. Brotherson, & Langerud. (n.d.). *The Art of Grandparenting No. 1: Becoming a Grandparent*. Publications, North Dakota State University. Retrieved August 1, 2023, from <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/kids-family/the-art-of-grandparenting-no-1-in-the-series>
2. Vishnupriya, R. (2002, January 1). Shodhganga@INFLIBNET: *Elderly as Grandparents Across the Life Span Perception of Two Generations*. <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/51079>



3. Sheppard, P., & Monden, C. (2019, June 6). *Becoming a First-Time Grandparent and Subjective Well-Being: A Fixed Effects Approach*. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(4), 1016–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12584>
4. Gessa, G. D., Bordone, V., & Arpino, B. (2019, October 30). *Becoming a Grandparent and Its Effect on Well-Being: The Role of Order of Transitions, Time, and Gender*. PubMed Central (PMC). <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbz135>
5. Danielsbacka, M., Křenková, L., & Tanskanen, A. O. (2022, January 4). *Grandparenting, health, and well-being: a systematic literature review*. *European Journal of Ageing*, 19(3), 341–368. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-021-00674-y>