

# INPLASY PROTOCOL

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**Review Stage at time of this submission:** Preliminary searches.

**Conflicts of interest:**  
None declared.

## INTRODUCTION

**Review question / Objective:** To map the concepts, themes, disciplinary approaches and methodologies adopted in the study of the older parents-middle-aged children dyad in the last ten years (2013 to date). Thus, this review aims to summarise and share the conceptual and methodological

## Exploring the relationship between older parents and their middle-aged children: a scoping review

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**Review question / Objective:** To map the concepts, themes, disciplinary approaches and methodologies adopted in the study of the older parents-middle-aged children dyad in the last ten years (2013 to date). Thus, this review aims to summarise and share the conceptual and methodological trends, as well as identify the main gaps in this area of knowledge.

**Rationale:** The relationship "older parents and middle-aged adult children" has been explored by several authors, particularly in the last ten years. Although the research developed is diversified and the findings are scientifically relevant, a review focused on this dyad that provides a broad and synthetic overview of the main conceptual and methodological trends as well as the respective scientific findings achieved in this field is still lacking.

**INPLASY registration number:** This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 24 May 2023 and was last updated on 24 May 2023 (registration number INPLASY202350089).

trends, as well as identify the main gaps in this area of knowledge.

**Background :** Intergenerational relationships, particularly those that take place within the family, have been widely studied. The various research topics explored so far reflect the breadth and level of complexity of this scientific field. In a

context where population ageing is an ever-growing reality, and societies aspire to increase and/or maintain the levels of well-being, health and quality of life of people at advanced stages of life, the study of family relationships, particularly the study of the relationship between older parents and their middle-aged adult children, has been gaining an increased scientific value, particularly in the last decade. Living increasingly longer lives has allowed contact between "adult" generations to become a more frequent reality. In turn, the interdependence underlying this intergenerational tie reinforces the relevance of its study, insofar as this tie is responsible for part of the results observed in the well-being and health of both parties involved. Studies have tried to understand in what way (factors and circumstances) this particular family tie favours or undermines the well-being and health of the two generations. We know that at some point, adult children will provide some kind of support to their parents, particularly in societies with family traditions, but the opposite can also occur. The effects of this intergenerational exchange, in the two dimensions pointed out, are wide and complex, since multiple and varied factors (micro and macrosocial) are also involved in this "equation". But the older parent-adult child relationship goes far beyond intergenerational support and the present review sets out precisely to provide a broad, complete, and up-to-date view of this reality. Besides the fact that the "middle-aged" generation is a generation with multiple and varied specificities of a developmental or generational nature, the focus on this generation also results from the expected increase in the prevalence of the older parents - middle-aged adult children dyad, in relation to the older parents - young adult children dyad, as a result of the increase in average life expectancy. For this reason, and given the absence of reviews focused on the study of this dyad, this review will seek to map the concepts, themes, disciplinary approaches and methodologies which have dominated research in the last ten years, and identify the main conceptual and methodological gaps, with the purpose of providing

researchers with knowledge and resources that will benefit the design of future research in this field.

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## METHODS

**Strategy of data synthesis:** The review will be based on the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology<sup>1</sup>, created to support the development of Scoping Reviews. For the development of the final search strategy, a preliminary search of some databases will be carried out in a first stage, in order to identify potential key terms that allow us to reach a high number of studies, therefore increasing the confidence on the comprehensiveness of the search results. Once the strategy is defined, the search will be carried out in five databases, which reflect the breadth and disciplinary diversity of this scientific field. The aforementioned datasets are: SCOPUS, Web of Science, PubMed, PsycInfo and Sociology Source Ultimate. As regards the key terms used, terms that reflect the two generations under study will be included: older parents and middle-aged children as well as terms that translate the interconnection between both generations. Thus, for the parents' generation, terms such as: "Elderly parents" OR "Ageing parents" OR "Aging parents" OR "Old\* parents" OR "Older adults" OR "Seniors" will be used. We are fully aware of the ageist potential of some of these terms but in order to avoid missing relevant references it was decided to keep them for the sole purpose of the searching phase. For the generation of middle-aged adult children the search terms include: "Middle-aged children" OR "Middle-aged offspring" OR "Middle-aged adults" OR "Midlife

children" OR "Midlife adults" OR "Adult children". The terms used for the interconnection between generations will be "Intergenerational" OR "Filial relationships" OR "Family ties". Aware that the databases have different functionalities, the search strategy will be adapted for each of them, while safeguarding the coherence of each adaptation with the objective proposed for this review. In addition to the articles which will be collected based on the implemented strategy, the list of references of the selected articles will also be analysed in order to flag potential studies of interest which meet the defined inclusion criteria. Articles to be included will be in English language, concerning primary studies and reviews, and published from 2013 to date.

**Eligibility criteria:** Participants: All studies that address the two generations under analysis (older parents and their middle-aged children), or one of them, will be included, and in the latter case, the study should focus on the intergenerational bond that brings the two generations together. Regarding the age groups, the following intervals will be considered for parents and children,  $\geq 50$  years and 35-64 years, respectively. It should be noted that, given the wide diversity of criteria adopted by the authors, there will be some flexibility in this criterion. Articles which include the "young adult" generation, a third generation, other relatives and/or significant others in their target population will not be included. Concept: All studies focusing on the intergenerational relationship established between older parents and middle-aged children will be included. The nature of the ties, whether biological or not, will not be considered in the screening process. Context: All studies carried out in a variety of contexts, either in the community or in an institutional context, will be included. Types of Studies: All types of studies will be included, with regard to the Design/Methodology adopted, insofar as one of the objectives of this review relates precisely to mapping the methods used in the study of the dyad.

**Source of evidence screening and selection:** The first author will implement the search strategy in the previously identified databases. All references will be transferred to the ENDNOTE X9 3.3 reference manager and duplicates will be removed. Titles and abstracts will be analysed by the first author, according to the inclusion criteria which were defined for the article selection process. The proceedings of the first screening phase will be shared with the co-authors and agreement will be reached as far as retention and exclusion criteria are concerned. The articles selected thereof will be analysed in their entirety to confirm their definitive integration in the review. The exclusion of articles will be duly substantiated in a specific document for this purpose, which will be attached to the review article.

**Data management:** After selecting the articles, the first author will extract the data. The information will be organised and registered in a table created for the purpose, following the proposed by the JBI methodology. The table will present the following sections: year of publication, leading author, other authors, title, journal, disciplinary approach, research topic, theme, research question/objective, central concepts, method, target population, country, main findings, additional notes.

**Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence:** The collected results will be described in a final document. In addition to the descriptive dimension, other forms of presentation of results will be used to improve readability: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA-ScR) flow diagram as well as other tables and flow charts.

**Presentation of the results:** A narrative/descriptive presentation of the results will be offered and either tables or flow charts will be used to display the results in a more objective and synthetic way. The findings will tackle the objective outlined for the review.

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**Language restriction:** Only articles written in English will be included.

**Country(ies) involved:** Portugal.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational relations, family ties, older parents, middle-aged children, review.

**Dissemination plans:** After the analysis of data and the completion of the review, the proceeding article will be submitted for publication in indexed journals. The results will also be shared in scientific conferences.

**Contributions of each author:**

**Author 1 - Sandrina Ribeiro -** Preparation of the review protocol; research, selection, extraction, registration and organisation of data. Elaboration of the final document.

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**Author 2 - Alexandra Lopes -** Monitoring/ Support in the drafting of the protocol and process of research, screening, extraction, registration and organisation of data. Editing of the protocol in English. Critical analysis and proposal for improvement to be implemented in the final document.

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