

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS IN MODERN UZBEK FAMILIES

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Abstract

The essence of national and universal values, as well as their influence on strengthening the family institution and intergenerational relations, is axiomatic. Humanity has entered such a stage of historical development that no nation, people, or state can progress without engaging in broad integration with others, contributing to global development, participating in solving global problems, and benefiting from universal norms, achievements, and values.

Introduction

The core of intergenerational relations in Uzbek families is reflected in the following characteristics:

- preservation of family unity and integrity;
- adherence to reproductive and demographic traditions;
- respect for the hierarchy established within the family;
- strengthening the family's position in the social space;
- fulfillment of differentiation (division) and confederation (unity) functions;
- valuing intergenerational relations as an ethno-cultural tradition.

Among the Uzbek people, there is a strong sense of honor and a desire to preserve personal and family reputation. Before undertaking any action, an individual considers its potential impact on their own or their family's reputation. If an action could damage this reputation, it is often abandoned, even at personal cost. This reflects the deep loyalty of the Uzbek people to their traditions and historical-cultural experience. Preserving reputation is equivalent to preserving the integrity of the family institution. Where reputation is damaged, maintaining family unity becomes difficult. Family integrity primarily refers to harmony between parents, and subsequently to unity among children, grandchildren, and extended generations. Mutual understanding between spouses is essential; without it, the concept of family unity loses its meaning.

According to Uzbek traditions, family honor is also preserved through modesty, purity, chastity, and loyalty. If family members lack these universal virtues or neglect them in their behavior, conflicts are inevitable. Professor A. Hayitmetov emphasizes that in Islam, Sufism, and classical Eastern literature, the concept of modesty ("hayo") holds great importance. It is considered one of the foundations of morality and humanity. Alisher Navoi glorifies modesty in his work "Nazmuljavohir", praises modesty and being modest as follows:



**“Out of the dignity of honor, modesty became like the sun,
For the garden of fidelity, modesty became like a cloud.
For the harvest of meaning, modesty became a veil,
To the people’s gaze, it became as if a covering mask.”**

In contemporary understanding, modesty (“hayo”) signifies high culture, humility, and composure. According to Alisher Navoi, modesty illuminates and beautifies a person’s dignity and reputation like the sun. It is a cloud that protects the garden of happiness from the scorching heat of the sun. At the same time, modesty serves as a veil that conceals a person’s negative traits and as a covering that shields one’s eyes. Thus, being modest is a virtue necessary for every individual - whether a king or a beggar, a scholar or an ordinary worker. [1]

Having children is regarded as a fundamental condition for the continuation of a people and a nation. One of the distinctive values of the Uzbek people is a deep affection for children. Reproductivity, the maintenance of demographic stability, and the perception of life’s meaning through having and raising children are considered among the noble traditions of the Uzbek family. In Uzbek folk epics, tales, and proverbs, parenthood is exalted as an ideal mode of life. For example, in the epic *Alpomish*, the conflict between Boybo‘ri and Boysari arises from the elder brother (Boybo‘ri) demanding zakat from his younger brother (Boysari) due to the latter’s childlessness. “The essence of the matter is that Boybo‘ri interprets his brother’s departure as cowardice, betrayal, stubbornness, and even as defiance of established norms and traditions. In reality, this perception is not unfounded. Boysari, however, perceives his brother’s demand for zakat as an act of coercion and fails to recognize not only its socio-political dimensions but also its symbolic meaning as an expression of justice and as a traditional requirement consistent with Uzbek customs. As a result, a tragedy unfolds: the brothers become so estranged that they no longer acknowledge one another.” [2] The intensification of tensions between the brothers and their families may be interpreted either as a manifestation of property differentiation or as a consequence of the disruption of patriarchal customs and established social order. In any case, the epic vividly reflects the traditions characteristic of the Uzbek family, as well as the transformations occurring within them.

Family relations in Uzbek households are characterized by a clearly defined hierarchical structure. At the apex of this hierarchy stands the head of the family, typically a male figure. Intergenerational relationships likewise operate within and are regulated by this hierarchical framework. Within the context of folk pedagogy, parents are regarded as the principal subjects of familial hierarchy, and the notions of obedience and respect toward them are articulated as follows: “Dear children, respect your parents. Respecting your parents demonstrates that they always hold an honored place before you. You are obliged to respect and obey them not merely because they are older than you, but because they have raised you from infancy to adulthood, fed and clothed you, sent you to school, and devoted their attention and care to your every need. Throughout your life - every day and every hour - remember the services they have rendered to you. Respect for parents must continue throughout your entire life, in times of happiness, joy, and even sorrow. Speak to them with an open face, kind words, and gentleness, and never forget their goodness and sacrifices. At times, old age may affect their mood, causing them to feel upset or distressed. In such moments, comfort them, lift their spirits, and try to make them smile. Fulfill the tasks they entrust to you without reluctance.”[3]



Hierarchical relations within the family differ fundamentally from those observed in formal organizations. Such relations are grounded in the cultivation of mutual affection and respect, adherence to the principle of honoring elders and valuing the younger, the promotion of benevolent intentions, and the continuity of intergenerational ties. “The interactions among parents, grandparents, and even elder brothers and sisters within the family give rise to its distinctive way of life as a primary social unit. Constructive and purposeful interpersonal relations, as well as the spiritual closeness of parents to their children - their ability to perceive the children’s inner world, anticipate their interests and aspirations, and provide attentive care - constitute essential characteristics of both the organization of family relations and the process of upbringing.” [3] In general, within Islamic values, reverence for the father is interpreted as analogous to reverence for God; committing a wrongdoing in his presence is regarded as equivalent to committing a sin before God. [4] Thus, in accordance with Eastern traditions, hierarchical relations within the family are organized in line with the guidance and expectations of the head of the household. However, such leadership is not arbitrary; rather, it emerges from the need to strengthen the family, ensure its unity, stability, and well-being, and to provide proper upbringing for children. In this respect, the universal character of national traditions becomes evident. Even though the father’s role within the family is significant and often decisive, it does not infringe upon the rights and equality of other family members, nor does it entail their humiliation or degradation.

The strengthening of the family’s position within the social space refers to the set of actions aimed at preserving the integrity of the family, its distinctive way of life, hierarchical structure, and traditions through the protection of the dignity, rights, freedoms, and social standing of its members. Although family members may live individually - each pursuing their own interests, aspirations, and professional activities - every family possesses its own unique system of shared values. The sense of belonging to a particular family, and identification as one of its members, is expressed through one’s attitude toward these common familial values. For instance, hierarchical relations within the family may at times be based on flexible or strict requirements, at other times on fully open democratic principles, or may take on a situational and adaptive (palliative) character depending on circumstances. In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in the status of women within the family, indicating a gradual shift from previously dominant patriarchal relations toward more matriarchal forms. Feminist movements are increasingly becoming an integral part of social development, and in this context, the tension between modernity and tradition, as well as between conservatism and traditionalism, appears inevitable. The central argument is that, regardless of the diversity of views and opinions upheld by individual family members, they tend to unite immediately when common familial values are threatened or when external pressure is exerted upon the traditions cherished by the family. In such circumstances, they collectively strive to eliminate the perceived threat. This phenomenon may be understood as an ethnic instinct shaped over many centuries. No people or nation can remain indifferent to the violation of its dignity, rights, and freedoms; even if only implicitly, it awaits the appropriate moment to free itself from oppression. The family, likewise, operates according to a similar instinctive logic.

As a dynamic institution, the family naturally undergoes processes of differentiation. In this context, differentiation refers to the emergence of new families through separation from the



original family unit. This process is particularly characteristic of extended, multi-generational families. Sociological observations indicate that families with up to three children are predominantly formed by young individuals aged between 18 and 29. In contrast, the preference for having three or more children is more commonly expressed by older and elderly individuals. Overall, there is a noticeable decline in the number of families aspiring to have many children. [5]

In response to the question, "How many generations are there in your family?", 59% of respondents indicated three generations (grandparents, a married couple, and their unmarried children), 29% reported two generations (a married couple and their unmarried children), 3% identified four generations (great-grandparents, grandparents, a married couple, and their unmarried children), and 2% reported a single generation (a married couple). These responses suggest that contemporary families are predominantly composed of two or three generations. Four-generation families are more commonly found in rural areas, typically in the form of extended households, whereas one- and two-generation families are more prevalent in urban settings. It is also observed that the increasing prevalence of modern multi-storey housing has an impact on intergenerational relations within families. It is likely that the number of two-generation families will continue to grow in the future.

Confederative relations refer to the connections established between newly formed, independent families and their parents. Although such families conduct their own household affairs independently, they remain spiritually and psychologically connected to their parents. For this reason, they tend to avoid distancing themselves from their parental homes and strive to maintain continuous contact. The parental household, along with its traditions, serves as a model and a formative institution for newly established families. It functions as a central point that unites family members, keeping them closely connected to one another. Its influence on the families of its children is characterized by a coordinating function. In essence, such confederative relations indicate that Uzbek families embody features of a universal human character.

The preservation and appreciation of intergenerational relations constitute the essence of familial ethno-traditions; without such relations, the very existence of the family as an institution would be inconceivable. However, the dynamics, boundaries, and processes of transformation within these relations are closely linked to the number of generations present within a family structure.

References

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