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# Hidden Within: Understanding the Inner Child in Baby Boomers

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**Abstract.** The study examines the concept of the "inner child" of baby boomers and, in so doing, begins to unravel how childhood experience is influential for mental and emotional outcomes later in life. The baby boomers refer, generationally, to persons born between 1945 and 1964. This generation grew up during an era of massive social change, with traditional parental practices and poor awareness of mental health issues often at play. In this regard, it is proposed that an examination of psychological dimensions, measurement tool developed by Kartasmita et al. (2023), which assesses six dimensions of inner child-related behaviors. The data from 387 baby boomers revealed an average score of 2.5462 (SD = 0.52443), showing lack of normality distribution in accordance with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $< 0.001$ ). Meanwhile, the strongest of these findings were for "Trauma-Related Behavior" (mean = 2.9367) and "Childhood Attachment Issues" (mean = 2.7041), suggesting the enduring significance of early life experiences. Recovery efforts and modalities aimed at emotional healing and reconciling with one's inner child are thus reinforced in their radius. Because baby boomers are getting set to enter old age, downright interventions to address unfinished business from their childhoods are increasingly becoming vital to benefit mental health and emotional well-being. This study broadens our understanding of the long-term psychosocial implications of early experiences, highlighting the need for integrative approaches toward mental health in conjunction with this specific cohort.

**Keywords:** Inner Child, Baby Boomers, Childhood Experiences

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The notion of the child doesn't suggest a child residing within us or a designated brain area, for childhood memories [1]. Instead, it signifies that each person harbors a element in their subconscious that may emerge in times of difficulty or happiness. This viewpoint underscores the significance of childhood as a period in existence because of its enduring influence, on shaping personality traits during subsequent life phases. Development goes beyond growth; emotional maturation, in childhood also significantly influences a persons overall happiness and health.

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Subsequent Expanding on this idea further is Carl Jung who was a known psychologist and an early follower of Freud's teachings. He was the first to introduce the concept of the child in his theory which delved into childhood feelings and how they impact our mental well-being, in the long run Jung stressed the importance of connecting with our inner child or those playful qualities, within us to comprehend emotions and behaviors that may seem overwhelming. He suggested that such introspection could result in a deeper self-awareness. Even Jung used this idea on himself by delving into the impact of reminiscing about childhood memories on his feelings and actions [2].

Building upon the concepts of Jung's theories is the belief held by psychologists today that the inner child plays a role, in human consciousness by storing emotional experiences and memories starting from early childhood through, to adulthood. The memories and experiences, from childhood have an impact on how someone behaves as a teenager and how they see themselves and the world around them [3]. According to Stephen Diamond's perspective on the inner child, as a representation of childhood memories that influence adult behavior with the concept of a "hurt inner child" pointing to psychological wounds or negative childhood encounters that linger into adulthood [1]. These wounds, if left unaddressed, can significantly affect an individual's mental health and overall well-being.

Diamond further emphasizes the deep-seated effects of unresolved childhood issues, noting that many mental disorders and self-destructive behavior patterns are linked to our inability to face the unresolved aspects of our past. He explains that while these childhood memories persist within us, most people tend to ignore or suppress them as they grow older. By suppressing these memories and childlike traits, they disconnect from their inner child. This disconnection often manifests in feelings of distress, behavioral challenges, and emotional breakdowns, which may feel difficult to resolve without addressing the root cause [4].

In terms of mental health, Meng et al. (2018) argue that self-concept and self-esteem are deeply connected to mental well-being [1]. This self-appreciation is rooted in the depths of the soul, and without reconciling with the inner child, it is impossible to achieve true peace, comfort, or tranquility. Similarly, Cotter (2018), also argues that no matter how hard a person tries to appear composed in front of themselves or others, without self-reconciliation and self-acceptance, they will continue to experience inner conflict [1]. This unresolved conflict can negatively impact mental health and potentially lead to psychological disorders. When the inner child is wounded, it inhibits the healthy development of the self.

This framework of inner child reconciliation holds particular relevance when exploring the mental well-being of baby boomers. The term "baby boomers" refers to the generation born during the significant population increase that followed World War II, often called the "baby boom," which occurred when many couples delayed having children during the war [5]. This generation is typically associated with traditional and conservative values, shaped by the social conditions of the time, including an emphasis on obedience, hard work, and responsibility. Although these values played a crucial role in achieving external success, they frequently neglected the importance of emotional exploration, which can result in inner conflicts later on.

Preceding the baby boomers, the Silent Generation, commonly referred to as the Builders Generation, encompasses their parents, who were raised during wartime and are distinguished by a conservative and patriotic perspective. They lived through the post-war recovery era and significant hardships, such as the Great Depression and World War II, which fostered a strong appreciation for resilience and hard work [6]. These generational differences, shaped by distinct historical and social contexts, have led to unique characteristics in each group. Baby boomers, in particular, were born during a period of reform, which shaped their outlook on life and emotional well-being [5].

As generations evolve, the interaction between parents and children encompasses rule-setting, teaching values and norms, and providing attention and affection. One often overlooked aspect is the attention given to the inner child, or the unresolved childhood emotional wounds, which can influence the behavior of individuals in adulthood. A lack of love and attention from parents during childhood is often cited as a contributing factor to behavioral issues such as juvenile delinquency. Consequently, it is critical for parents to be aware of their children's emotional needs and unresolved issues, ensuring they adopt healthy parenting practices. As Ramsey advised, "Provide our children with strong roots to grow and sturdy wings to fly later in life" [7].

## **1.2 Study Questions**

What molding of the self do baby boomers see in their inner child, and how does accepting how one perceives it improve their mental and emotional well-being?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate how individuals, from the baby boomer generation perceive and comprehend their child's presence in their lives while delving deeper into their perspectives and meanings attached to this concept. Furthermore, this study extends its scope by assessing how Boomers are influenced both mentally and emotionally when they learn and embrace their inner child. This study goes deep into the psychosocial conflicts of baby boomers in terms of the potential effects the process of coming into terms with their inner children presents, on their overall psychological wellness and emotional calmness.

# **2 Methodology**

## **2.1 Participant Characteristics**

This study focuses on the Baby boomer generation, which includes the cohort of individuals that was born from the year 1945 to 1964. As the current date this study cohort has an age range that is approximately 60-79 years. There are no current restrictions on the participants' ethnicity, race, faith, or area of the world guaranteeing wide coverage of the baby boomers'.

## 2.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling, which is also called judgmental or selective or subjective sampling. According to Firmansyah & Dede (2022), this approach is employed when a researcher chooses participants for a study based on certain characteristics which are needed for the study. Unlike random selection, purposive sampling is meant to help the researcher to strategically select people who can avail of relevant information on the subject matter. The study sampled people between the ages of 60-79 years, and who are largely baby boomers, thus much is expected of them. The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling, which is also called judgmental or selective or subjective sampling. According to Firmansyah & Dede (2022), this approach is employed when a researcher chooses participants for a study based on certain characteristics which are needed for the study. Unlike random selection, purposive sampling is meant to help the researcher to strategically select people who can avail of relevant information on the subject matter. The study sampled people between the ages of 60-79 years, and who are largely baby boomers, thus much is expected of them.

## 2.3 Setting and Instruments

The study setting involves distributing questionnaires through social media networks such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Line, and Twitter as well as face to face among people who qualify to be participants. Questionnaires have been enhanced by breaking them into qualified sections into such as attaining informed consent, who qualifies, and seeking to find out the participants' comprehension of the inner child concept. All people willing to participate in online surveys are required to click on the informed consent before proceeding to the key questionnaire. The questionnaire employs the Likert type scale so as to ensure quantitative assessment of various key dimensions covered by the topic of studies and its scope while at the same time allowing the collection of meaningful information for later analysis.

## 2.4 Measurement Tool

The study employs the 'Inner Child Measurement Tool' developed by Kartasasmita et al. (2023), with permission granted by the authors for its use in this study. This tool employs a Likert scale with four response options: *STS (Sangat Tidak Setuju)*, *TS (Tidak Setuju)*, *S (Setuju)*, and *SS (Sangat Setuju)*, which mean strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The measurement tool consists of six dimensions: Behavioral Dysfunction, Self-Sabotage, Self-Defeating, Self-Defeating Behaviors, Trauma-Related Behavior, Childhood Attachment Issues, and Codependency, comprising a total of 24 items. Each dimension contains two positive and two negative items.

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Statistical Description and Normality Test

This study assessed 387 baby boomers, focusing on their "inner child" dimension. The average score was 2.5462, with a standard deviation of 0.52443, showing moderate variation.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed that "inner child" scores are not normally distributed, with a most extreme differences 0.205 (absolute), 0.122 (positive), -0.205 (negative). Additionally, a significance (p) value of < 0.001 confirms the lack of normality.

#### 3.2 Analysis of Differences

**Table 1.** Mean and T-Test Based on Gender.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Male	194	2.5595	0.54607	0.309	No Significant
Female	193	2.5328	0.50282		

A T-Test was used to compare "inner child" scores between male and female respondents. The average score for males was 2.5595, while for females, it was 2.5328. The results indicate no significant difference in scores by gender (p = .309).

**Table 2.** Mean and T-Test Based on Age.

Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
≤65 years	324	2.4756	0.53790	<0.001	Significant
>65 years	63	2.9094	0.21174		

Age was grouped into two categories: respondents aged 65 and under and those over 65. The group aged ≤ 65 scored an average of 2.4756, while the > 65 group scored 2.9094. The T-Test showed statistically significant difference in scores between these age groups (p < 0.001).

#### 3.3 Dimension-Specific Analysis of Inner Child

**Table 3.** Dimension-Specific Analysis of Inner Child.

Dimension	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation
Behavioral Dysfunction	387	1.00	3.75	2.6370	0.61050
Self-Sabotage	387	1.00	3.75	2.4955	0.74381
Self-Defeating Behaviors	387	1.00	3.50	2.2171	0.51283
Trauma-Related Behavior	387	1.00	4.00	2.9367	0.79864
Childhood Attachment Issue	387	1.25	3.50	2.7041	0.52956

Codependency	387	1.00	3.75	2.2868	0.50589
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Analysis of specific dimensions showed that "Trauma-Related Behavior" and "Childhood Attachment Issue" have the highest average scores, indicating that childhood attachment issues and traumatic experiences may be particularly impactful in this generation.

## 4 Discussions and Conclusions

### 4.1 Discussions

Overall, the study found patterns in "inner child" dimensions among baby boomers that are consistent with prior study. Variation across dimensions suggests notable differences in how childhood behaviors continue to shape emotional experiences in adulthood. The lack of significant differences by gender or age implies that childhood experiences impact baby boomers relatively equally across these demographics, supporting the idea that early experiences have lasting effects largely independent of age or gender.

However, "Trauma-Related Behavior" and "Childhood Attachment Issue" emerged as dimensions with the highest average scores. This proposes that attachment difficulties in childhood and trauma experiences could have greater consequences among baby boomers.

As for the dimension of the "Trauma-Related Behavior" it had the highest average score of 2.9367 which means respondents formed unstable or below average attachments during their childhood which is still a factor in their current adult lives. Unhealthy attachment in early life can create deep-seated issues around sound formulation of safe stable, and secure relationships exposing individuals to low self-worth, excessive emotional dependence, or requiring and trusting others to be totally dependable which is never the case.

The "Childhood Attachment Issue" recorded a high average score of 2.7041 showing that a good number of respondents had childhood trauma, which is developed into behavior and emotional response. Such experiences as loss, neglect, or even abuse have critical bearing emotional after effects that lead to anxiety, insecurity, and great emotional stimulation in given situations or environment.

These findings hint that baby boomers as a generational cohort still harbor the vestiges of earlier parenting and societal norms that could be very unlike the methods employed today. Issues related directly to early attachment and trauma highlight the importance of present recovery work and therapy aimed at emotional healing and security in relationships. Due to the age of baby boomers who were nurtured through critical times of social change, traditional methods of parenting and lack of awareness for better mental health might explain ongoing attachment and trauma-related challenges. The present assessments will demonstrate that these impacts are far from being rooted simply in childhood but extend outward into life with paramount significance.

## 4.2 Conclusions

The study highlights the influence of early childhood experiences on emotional response and behavior patterns carried into adulthood among baby boomers. Interestingly enough, the most salient factors are things such as “Trauma-Related Behavior” and “Childhood Attachment Issue,” showing that issues as early as attachment difficulties and trauma persist in the emotional lives of people from this cohort. The lack of dramatic variation by gender or age lends credence to the idea that what affects baby boomers is the context of their childhood home, regardless of demographic differences. The implication is that core environmental and relational aspects continue to exert their strong effects into later in the lifecycle. Moreover, the findings suggest that conventional parenting styles and a poor understanding of mental health issues affected their development stage and may have embedded faulty emotional and relational patterns in early years. Having these issues dealt with is essential; if not, it will greatly impact self-value, emotional dependency, and establishing healthy and stable relationships.

There are several things that can be done to help baby boomers to overcome the long-term affects of childhood trauma and attachment issues: This includes access to therapy and programs that target emotional healing, self-worth, and secure attachment-based practices. Educating people about the lasting effects of early experiences will help foster understanding and support for generations who struggle in this way. It is also important to strengthen family and community support systems, so that there are safe spaces to which these students can turn for open dialogue and trust. Finally, an understanding of this generation's unique experiences should inform therapeutic approaches, producing strategies that speak to their particular history and context. Finally, sharing those lessons with younger generations can inspire more adaptive approaches to parenting, breaking the cycle of repeating those same patterns over and over again.

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