"Man is a social animal" – Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher.

Humans are social creatures who rely on and thrive in the presence of others. From an evolutionary perspective, we have always lived in groups, shaping how we interact with others and the world around us. Whether it is through friendships, family connections, or community involvement, human beings need social interaction and support to thrive. In addition to the psychological and emotional benefits of social connections, being a social animal also has practical benefits. By working together, we are able to achieve more than we could individually. As social beings, humans naturally seek out social connections and relationships with others, and this is especially true when it comes to intergenerational solidarity. Intergenerational solidarity involves the sense of connection and shared responsibility between people of different ages, and it is characterized by mutual respect, support, and cooperation. This type of solidarity relies on social connections and relationships between people of different generations, and it can be an important source of learning, enrichment, and support for all age groups.

In a society, intergenerational solidarity can play a vital role in promoting social cohesion and addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. By working together and sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise, people of different ages can create a more fair and just society that benefits all age groups. Additionally, it can help us to break down stereotypes and prejudices between generations and promote mutual understanding and respect.

The United Nations (UN) defines intergenerational solidarity as "a relationship of sharing, mutual respect, and cooperation between generations, based on the recognition that the needs and interests of younger and older people are interdependent and that both have a contribution to make to the well-being of society." This definition highlights the mutual dependence and mutual benefit that underlies intergenerational solidarity, as well as the importance of recognizing and valuing the contributions of all age groups to society.

According to the UN, intergenerational solidarity is essential for achieving sustainable development and addressing the challenges of an aging population. It involves actions such as sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise between generations, as well as advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit all age groups. The UN also emphasizes the role of intergenerational solidarity in promoting social cohesion and building stronger, more inclusive communities.

Qazi Shuaib Wasi, SRMIST

Intergenerational solidarity involves addressing a range of issues. Some common examples include:

a.   Aging and elder care: As people live longer and healthier lives, the challenge of supporting and caring for an aging population becomes increasingly important. This can include issues such as access to healthcare, social support, and appropriate living arrangements for older people. Addressing these issues reflects the principles of intergenerational solidarity, including mutual respect and cooperation, which is essential for building an inclusive, supportive society for all age groups.

b.   Education and mentorship: Sharing knowledge and expertise between generations is a valuable source of learning and enrichment. By providing mentorship and guidance to younger people, older individuals help to shape the next generation and pass on their skills and experiences. At the same time, younger people can bring fresh perspectives and new ideas to the table, contributing to the continued growth and development of society.

c.   Sustainability and environmental responsibility: Ensuring that the planet and its resources are preserved for future generations is a shared responsibility that requires cooperation and collaboration between people of different ages. Working together to address sustainability and environmental challenges in a way that reflects the principles of intergenerational solidarity is very necessary to create a more sustainable and livable future for all age groups.

d.   Social justice and inequality: Social justice and inequality among people of different ages is a significant issue within the realm of intergenerational solidarity. Ensuring that all age groups have access to opportunities, resources, and support is essential for our existence and prosperity. For example, older people may face discrimination and exclusion based on their age and may have difficulty accessing healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Younger people may also face challenges, such as lack of access to education, high levels of unemployment, or discrimination based on their age or other factors.

Addressing these issues and promoting social justice and equality among people of different ages requires cooperation and collaboration between different age groups. It may involve advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit all age groups, sharing resources and knowledge between generations, and working together to address the challenges and barriers that different age groups face.

There is no one answer to achieving intergenerational solidarity. It is a matter of finding common ground and working together to build a better future for all. Some ways to achieve solidarity between generations include communication, shared experiences, and understanding.

Advocating for policies and initiatives that benefit all age groups, rather than just one generation, can be an effective way to promote intergenerational solidarity. This could include policies that support the needs and interests of older people, such as access to healthcare and social support, or policies that support the education and employment opportunities of younger people, and also, incentivize employers to hire and retain older workers; and provide tax breaks or other benefits for families with children.

Another essential way of tackling this could be, supporting community initiatives that bring people of different ages. This could include initiatives such as intergenerational sports teams, community gardens, or volunteer programs that involve people of different ages working together.

Encouraging dialogue and communication between people of different ages can help to break down stereotypes and prejudices and foster mutual understanding and respect. This could involve initiatives such as intergenerational discussion groups or events that bring people of different ages together to share their experiences and perspectives. Intergenerational discussion groups, events and activities, Online platforms, and awareness campaigns are some good strategies to start with.

Intergenerational Solidarity is among the pillars of the economic sustainable development of the human race. Thus, it should be promoted enthusiastically to develop a more healthy, wholesome, and cohesive global society.