

GENERATIONAL CLEAVAGE: COMPONENTS AND FACTORS

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ABSTRACT: *The changing world and evolving family are regarded as realities which make us accept another fact called "generation cleavage". Whereas this phenomenon has not still been raised as a serious issue in Iran and its dimensions is not as broad as those in some foreign countries, the issue is one of the challenges that we should soon or late deal with and find answers for its fundamental questions. On the other hand, when speaking about future developments, some scientists in education consider future as being manifested as the phenomenon known as "the emergence of an interconnected world". Although, considering the world as "an interconnected and interdependent totality" based on justice and sincerity is pleasant for common senses, the main issue is its realization and ways to achieve such considerations. The objectives of human development include properties such as good relations, culture, teamwork, organizing behavior, management, problem solving, adjustment skill, ethics, protection of the environment, etc. All these properties go under the rubric of social components to achieve human development. The realization of the above-mentioned factors means the unity and coexistence of generations that along with an establishment of good relations with each other; they will jointly try to accomplish the objectives of development. Despite optimism toward this phenomenon, another phenomenon called "generation curtailment" is unfortunately emerging. What is generational cleavage, what is its nature, what factors are there for its identification and which factors influence its development are all questions which are to be addressed in this study.*

Keywords: Generation Cleavage, Components, Factors

INTRODUCTION

Definition of generational cleavage

Gradual geographical, emotional, thinking and value distance between two or three successive generations creates a new situation called generational cleavage in which teenagers and the youth would mostly try to disrupt the latest links of dependence on their parents or adult generation and most of them will have disobedience on this way.

If such cleavage occurs between children and parents, it means that the nuclear family has turned to a one-generation family. If the cleavage happens between parents and grandparents, it implies that the extended family has turned to a nuclear family. Also, if such cleavage occurs simultaneously among grandparents, parents and adolescents and the youth, it means that the extended family has changed to a one-generation family [1].

However, if the above-mentioned cleavage happens between adolescents and the youth and adults including teachers, instructors, professors and relatives or between adolescents and the youth and authorities, including organizations, institutions and official society centers as governmental symbol, a type of cleavage have again occurred in a wider and deeper area. This cleavage is socially and politically has a quite more significance and it may even result in anti-social conducts. However, in these cases, anti-social conducts are not the aim, but as a tool to prove the essence and assertiveness of individuals. The major factor in anti-social conducts is explained by the description of negative identity. Ericsson argues that when people suffer from an identity crisis, most of them will feel emptiness, alienation, loneliness and nostalgia and even sometimes look for negative identity which is contrary to what their parents and community had considered for them. Most anti-social and maladaptive conducts on the part of teenagers and the youth can be explained based on this perspective.

The diversity in generation orientations

In terms of the approach generations adapt toward each other and the method they deal with each other, the following three situations can be explained:

1. Generation link

In such situation, older, adult and young generations live together in unity and harmony, hence extended family is created. Experiences and insights of the older generation are transferred to the adult generation whose experiences and insights in turn are transferred to the younger one and a peaceful coexistence is formed among them. The intergenerational relationships are based on mutual respect and acceptance and understanding of mutual perspectives. Also, due to the existence of an opportunity for empathy, a certain mental relaxation governs their relationships.

2. Generational cleavage

The second approach is based on the feeling of complete independence that in practice, leads to distance and complete separation from each other. As a result, the phenomenon of generation curtailment takes place here.

3. Generational conflict

The other situation arising after generation cleavage is the conflict and confrontation of generations. Such situation first begins from the negative approach of one generation toward another generation. Such an approach relies on rejection, conflict and proscription of each other and leads practically to conflict, hostility and contrast. This is usually applied by a younger generation against its older one. Socially speaking, generation conflict means behaviors such as norm-breaking, conflict with regulations and laws and misdemeanor [2].

Historical background

One of the historical documents in the context of concern about generation cleavage is the trial of Socrates. One day in the morning when Socrates was walking in the city market, he saw a statement hung on the wall:

"Socrates is accused of treason: first, because he does not worship the city's gods, but his own new gods and second, because he makes the youth corrupt. Death is the penalty for these two sins".

His main claimant was a merchant who sold leather named Atonos who personally gruded Socrates because Socrates had admonished his son to abandon his father's job (tannery) and devote himself to the study of philosophy. Atonos was

furious because his son did not pick his job and insisted that the penalty for corrupting the youth would not be less than death. The conflict was that of leather and knowledge and unfortunately in this conflict, leather won. Socrates was arrested and sentenced to death in the court [3].

The background in Islamic culture

About generation cleavage in terms of belief, some hints have been made in the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths some of which are exemplified below. In Sura Al-Ahqaf¹, Quran refers to the separation between two generations in terms of belief and says:

"But he who says to his parents: "Shame on you: You intimidate me that I will be resurrected when many generations will have passed before me?" And (the parents) would implore God's help: "Woe to you. You better believe. The promise of God is certainly true." Yet he answers: "These are only fables of long ago".

In some Narratives and Hadiths, the emotional and psychological separation of two generations (parents-child) has been pointed out.

For example, in part of his sermon on describing the end of the world, Imam Ali says:

"You are at the time when the youth are vile, the old are guilty, the wise are hypocrites and Quran reciters are evil. The smaller individuals do not respect the older ones and the rich do not undertake the poor's affairs". Here, Imam Ali, The Infallible, has pointed out the disaffirmation of adult generation by the young one and the distance between them. This cleavage has first an emotional and psychological background and then, leads to thought and belief cleavages [4].

The background in Persian literature

The phenomenon of generational cleavage has a deliberative history in the rich Iranian-Islamic literature and culture. Among from them, Sa'di Shirazi narrates that:

"I was the guest of an old man who possessed abundant wealth and a beautiful son. One night he narrated to me that he had all his life, no other son but this boy, telling me that in the locality people resorted to a certain tree in a valley to offer petitions and that he had during many nights prayed at the foot of the said tree, till the Almighty granted him this son. I overheard the boy whispering to his companion: 'How good it would be if I knew where that tree is that I might pray for my father to die.' Moral: The gentleman is delighted that his son is intelligent and the boy complains that his father is a dotard.

Years elapse without thy visiting,

The tomb of thy father,

What good hast thou done to him?

To expect the same from thy son?

Components of identifying generation cleavages

If we are to study the phenomenon of generational cleavage from a pathological perspective, some criteria of its identification should also be investigated. Although it cannot be conclusively asserted that all these criteria have been identified and defined, some of the most important ones can be presented as follows. It should be noted that the existence

of one case of the following components does not necessarily mean generation cleavage; however, the simultaneous aggregation of a number of such components indicates the existence of this phenomenon.

1. Decline in verbal communication

One of the most common communication in human relations is verbal communication that relies on understanding and intimacy and connects the inner world of two generations. If the verbal communication between adult and young generations is low and this continually and constantly, become deeper and more severe, it will largely reflect the separation of the two generations from each other. This will be resolved when one of the parties takes an initiative and finds a starting point for communication and successfully sustains the dialogue process.

2. Disorder in identification process

One of the features of the relationship between two generations is the configuration of young generation from the adult one. Such process is commonly called identification process. Children usually try to adapt their behavior to that of adults and their homogeneous individuals i.e. boys are trying to adapt their behavior to their fathers' while girls are trying to adapt their behavior to their mothers'. However, in the phenomenon of generation cleavage, such process is interrupted and a type of disturbance happens that is for identification, children substitutes another person for the character of their fathers and mothers and behaviorally adapt to him. Continuing such a situation would lead to a crisis in identification to the adult generation (parents and teachers) which in turn consolidates generation cleavage.

3. Decline in emotional commonalities

Life is full of diverse and fleeting moments and opportunities that some of them are good, pleasant and engaging, while others are difficult, bitter and complex in some ways. If both young and adult generations get along well in the part of these situations and take benefit of companionship with each other, this means they have some commonalities. Unlike, emotional commonalities are the factors of generation link, their decline or loss leads to generation cleavage.

4. Lack of commitment to one's own culture

One of the signs of the separation of two generations is the reduction of the younger generation involvements to the cultural values of the adult generation. In these cases, the youth observes the cultural trends of the adult generation with suspicion and distrust and consider this as permission for distancing from them. However, lack of knowledge to one's own culture causes separation and in some cases, the view that some values belong to adult culture is considered as a complete reason to abandon them.

5. Intolerance of generations

The quality and the way of relating among generations indicate the situation that each generation adapts against others. If observe areas including intolerance of one generation to another and this phenomenon is not limited to certain cases and is common, it can be considered as an evidence of generational cleavage.

6. The absence of young generation in social participations

¹ Al-Ahqaf/ 17

A dynamic, alive and developing community is one which is able to attract a large number of young populations in social arena. Given the development and expansion program for the participation of young generation, it is expected that this generation actively, widely and passionately participate in the field of social participations more than before. Otherwise, denying opportunities for social participations of the youth can be considered as a sign of distancing generations and separating young generation from the society and executive and decision-making centers and institutions [5].

Factors affecting generational cleavage

To investigate factors affecting the phenomenon of generation cleavage, two terms of cause and factor should be precisely explained. From a pathological point of view like that of criminology, cause creates crime while factor is not lonely the creator of the issue and its role is just to the extent of influence. With respect to this introduction, some effective factors are discussed.

1. Alienation

The accelerated and increasing trend of contemporary life is in the way that it has attracted the attention of human so that no opportunity remains for humans to think about themselves and find the answer of fundamental questions about them. So, human become gradually further alienated and the feel for loneliness is substituted with development. This is true for both young and adult generations. However, the young generation experiences and suffers from alienation more than the adult generation. Therefore, it can be concluded that since two generations have been affected by relative alienation, they are unable to establish any link between them and the previous links are also interrupted. This phenomenon will continue to expand unless generations overcome alienation

2. Emotional cleavage as a ground for mental cleavage

One of the consequences of the new era is the overemphasis on human individuality in a way that it will gradually lead to the phenomenon of a narcissistic personality. According to Erich Fromm, narcissistic one is a symbol of the new age. This is the one who always waits for other person's love but does not take such obligation for himself against others. He tries unilaterally to get other people's emotions but does not devote his love and emotions to others. The logical conclusion of such situation is the emotional cleavage of generations which have less incentive for sending their emotion to others because narcissistic manner and its limitations will remain no opportunity for this issue [6].

3. Increasing parental employment

Unbalanced economy and lack of balance between revenue and costs of life have faced parents with new and unintended problems. Fathers work outdoors more than before. Also, some of them select two or even three jobs to meet the needs of their life. So, they are more tired and confused than ever. Some mothers and women have begun to work outdoors; consequently they have neglected their homes and its related responsibilities. As a result, parents have no sufficient mental capacity to face with their children and solve their problems and deficiency in relationship threatens them and their generation so that the gap between parents and children as two separated generation has become deeper and more serious.

On the other hand, consumer-oriented life, raising consumption and conspicuous consumption have caused to increase the costs of living and more and more demand of children from their parents in these areas. So, the teenagers and youth raise new demands due to their age and living conditions, while parents feel a kind of confusion and difficulty for their own inability to meet these demands. The logical consequence of such event is the creation of a gap between the two generations. Such trend may lead to a complete separation.

4. Advanced Communication Technology

The achievements of the communications age include the appearance of huge computers and phenomena such as internet and satellite. The nature of such phenomena is attractive and wonderful for the young generation while it does not attract the adult generation much because they feel worried more than attracted. Concern about the adverse, harmful and counter-culture consequences of such phenomena is not an undue concern because its consequence is the attraction of the young generation and interaction with these factors. Issues such as preparation, purchase, application and usage of these phenomena also cause problems in emotional, spiritual and intellectual communication between two generations in the family environment and in some cases, leads to unwanted conflicts and frictions between them. This leads the young generation, even not to hesitate about the possibility of these phenomena as corrupt and the adult generation not to attempt to learn and use it properly. Thus, the relation in whom the young generation is attracted to the high communication technology and the adult generation is away from it will lead to separate generations from each other over time [7].

5. Difficult puberty and painful Adolescence

Experts recognize puberty as a difficult period of life and adolescence as a transition period to the young years. Understanding puberty conditions is difficult for both the individual himself and his family and its continuation in teen years also adds to its difficulty. One of its complexities is that some behaviors of adolescents are not properly and accurately interpreted by adults and they often stigmatize them. The continuation of such vision toward the teens gradually discourages them and undermines their self-confidence. Hence, they distrust the family and adults who are the origin of the negative conception to them and take away from them and join those who praise them i.e. peers and friends. In addition, young and adolescent generation enjoy pride due to the nature of the growth period. Thus, they do not become a pioneer for communication with the adult generation and therefore, will not be able to express their demands to the adult generation. This is greatly causing generations away from each other and a deep alienation between them.

6. Cultural poverty

Culture is defined as the set of habits, beliefs, arts, music and other thought achievements of human created by a group of people at a particular time.

According to such definition, culture is the phenomenon affected by the collective efforts of people in the area of thoughts and beliefs and is considered as the commonality

between society and the public. So, from one perspective, it can be said that culture is the factor that links two or more generations together and that if the community suffers from cultural disruption, it will also naturally suffer from generational cleavage because the unifying factor of national culture has no meaningful presence among them [8].

7. Lack of social identity

In the explanation of social identity, it can be said that if a person is evaluated in terms of his social role and tasks and the expectations on the part of the society on him, the issue of social identity will be actually understood. However, some authors and thinkers such as Hobbes, Nietzsche, Stirner and Lodantech argue that man will never become social and feel homesick and alienated in the depth of his internal and his blinding social behavior is superficial and artificial. Other scientists believe that the overcoming intensity of personal desires is reduced over time and the scope and extent of emotions and perceptions to others will be increased.

Thus, social identity means the sense of connection with others, understanding the dignity of the individual in society and understanding the mutual expectations of individual and society and that it is the phenomenon arising as a need and necessity in the young generation.

Accordingly, any factor which causes to weaken and fade the social identity of a generation will consequently affect its link with the society and any factor which causes to loosen the mentioned links will lead to the separation of generations from each other over time [9].

8. Foreign culture invasion

As foreign and western culture entered into Islamic communities, particularly Iran, a kind of cultural transformation was created in some societies and intellectuals. In this process, adolescents and youth were exposed to cultural invasion more than others and through orientation and belonging to a foreign culture; they gradually found themselves against the adult generation whose traditional culture relied on in a way that each generation was seriously forced to defend its culture for the defense of its existence. Such a position sometimes led to generation cleavage and in other cases, it resulted in conflict between generations.

Interpreting western culture as a virus, Samuel Huntington wrote: "political leaders who proudly imagine that they are able to fundamentally change the culture of their community, would absolutely fail. Although they enter elements of Western culture into their own community, they are not able to destroy and overshadow the main native elements; however, when the virus of West enters into the body of the society, it is difficult to dislodge. The virus resists but does not destructive, the patient survives, but his health never returns. Political leaders can make history, but cannot escape from it. What they do is not a Western society but a country fractured from inside. They infect their community to cultural double-think and that the disease becomes persistent and takes root[10].

9. Inability to empathize with future generations

The coexistence of two or more generations is obtained in the light of the insight and approach that focuses on the future instead of on the present and has the ability to look ahead and

has prospective thought. In case of the absence of such an insight, the domain of interest issues for every generation will be very limited and narrow. In the closed scope of such an idea, there will remain no place to consider others and their interested issue.

One of the experts in UNESCO, named Rajasitg, writes: all these global issues call for growing attitudes by which the current generation can empathize with the future generations and have the ability of forethought and thinking about the future. Therefore, new consciousness will be raised in the present generation. Education should prepare human for future so that he will have the ability to meet the challenges that the current problems would create.

10. Lack of moral obligation

There is a contrast between forces changing the outside world and the central core of human existence. One day, these may mutually destroy each other unless the value world dominates the material world.

The above speech has been delivered by one of UNESCO experts. It seems that the change factors increase among adolescents and young people while the central core of their existence i.e. the internal values does not experience much growth. Over time, the gap between the youth and values become more and more and hence, the gap between the youth and supporters of values (adult generation) will be deeper and more serious. Then, the above-mentioned expert says:

To create moral obligation among adolescents and young people, they should be exposed to great thoughts and the emergence of values which promote humans to great spirituality, thoughts related to the human dignity and individual freedom and social responsibility, kindness and compassion.

However, the basic problem still remains because moral and ethical obligation can make the young generation full of the sense of responsibility for other generations when there is a sustained belief within it while the vacancy of such a belief can clearly be observed. To elaborate more, Santayana stated that: the youth have lost the ancient beliefs while they have not found fresh ideas which bring them perfection [11].

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