A Sociological Perspective of Generation Gap

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Abstract:
In recent years the problem of unrest among the youth is on increase, because youths of today are very much influenced by the process of modernization than their parents. Hence there is lot of difference in attitudes, values, behaviour patterns and aspirations between youths and their parents. This type of difference is not of recent origin but the magnitude of the difference is greater today due to impact of modernization in India. India is one of the developing countries of the world with a fairly heterogeneous population in which the process of modernization is most visible. After independence Indian society is undergoing rapid socio-cultural changes due to this continuing process of modernization. The spread of urbanization, literacy and industrialization have brought about distinctive psycho-social changes in the personality structure of the individuals, who exposed to them. Therefore today we find more conflict between modernized and traditional sections of the society. This reflects in generation gap.

Key words: Generation gap

1. Introduction

The modern youth perceive themselves as group apart from the older generation. This isolation of age groups has led to a teenage, subculture, which influences more than the parents. A youth culture is existing embodying values in conflict with those of the adult world. Due to modernization and expansion of education a majority of older people suffer from cultural lag that leaves them a few paces behind in knowledge in various vital areas of modern life. The younger generation is accumulating knowledge so fast that the older generation is unable to carry out a significant portion of its traditional function of guidance. This has brought about generation gap.

In every society the old seek to dominate the youth, but adolescents cherish their independence. The result that the youth rebel against the old, the youth would like to build a new world nearer to their hearts image and closer to their aspirations. The old however want the young to behave in accordance with their decisions. The old think that they are the defenders of the traditional order, in which they born. The old and the youth often face different daily problems. Hence, they have different experiences, occupy different positions and have a very different stake in the social system. Where social change is rapid the two generations simply group in different worlds and results in generation gap. Hence in the present day adolescent generation differ from their parents.

2. Generation Gap in Family Life

The home is the principle setting where the family is the first to observe and be affected by the child's changing attitudes. The family is accepted as the significant agency of socialization. The family is a major transmission belt for the diffusion of cultural standards to the forthcoming generation. However, the mechanism for disciplining the child in terms of cultural goals and moves may against the views of adolescents, which can lead the generation differences and conflict.

In the nuclear family the parents generally impose lesser restrictions as the family environment is more democratic. In a joint family the child has to obey not only his parents but also other members in the family. Several rules and regulations, codes of conducts, etc. are imposed on him. As a result of such restrictions the development of independent behaviour on the part of the child is restricted as this is the stage where the child seeks emancipation from the restrictions imposed by the family. An individual wants to achieve more autonomy, mainly to achieve more emotional autonomy, behavioural autonomy and value autonomy. While attempting to achieve these adolescent faces problems in the family, which affects the family relationships.

3. Generation Gap in Marital Life

Marriage is an institution which admits men and women to family life. It is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted to have children implying the right to sexual relations. Marriages are conducted in families more or less with the consent of parents. The family is considered a more significant entity than the individual. The individual cannot consider him as a person separate from and even within the family. Moreover the authoritarian structure of the family leave little room for independent choices and decisions, not to speak of action, even in matters vitally concerning the individual personal life including marriage. Family considerations are supreme for the members. This type of decision making process often creates discontent and leads to strained relationship between parents and children.

Modern marriage is often based on mutual sexual attraction, romantic interest and glamour with little consideration of financial arrangements, social contacts between the two families involved, future care of children and more thought of stability than the perennial are looking for a glamorous, exciting mistress with a pretty face rather than a good house keeper or a satisfactory mother for her children. A young woman is trying to attract a handsome, exciting, romantic lover, although she does have some thoughts of improving both her social and economic position. At the beginning, marriage is chiefly a man's diversion to woman it is a career.

So far as age of marriage is concerned in India we find marriages of both boys and girls are settled in very early age. In many families parents are making arrangements for the marriage of their children particularly girls. But trend is changing; modern youths are not ready to take family responsibilities in an early age. First they want to settle down in their life by choosing a proper job. Then think about their marital life. Therefore have an attempt is made to understand gap regarding age at marriage for both boys and girls.

4. Generation Gap in Recreation

 Recreation is very essential for every individual. It pleases mind and gives more energy to take active participation in further activities. Today lot of changes has been taken place in the means of recreation. All these means of recreation thoroughly help the individuals for the all-round personality development. Some are harmful for the development of personality, which mislead the youths and directly or indirectly force them to take parting anti-social activities. Therefore there emerges generational conflict regarding patterns of recreation. The common forms of recreation in the city consist of going to hotels, clubs, movie, watching different channels of television, picnic with friends etc. many times the parents impose restrictions on the modes of recreation of the adolescents.

Parents restrict their children's visit to the play grounds to play games, to the organized clubs and centers, meant for utilization of leisure time which attract youth. But youth often like to visit such centers, which lead to generational conflict; mass media is also one of the most important social phenomena. The youth are the most important consumers of mass media like cinema, TV etc. But some parents oppose their children to visit theatres to watch films, to watch television at home particularly their favourite programmes in television and other activities. Therefore here an attempt is made to understand generation gap regarding recreation pattern of adolescents.

Every individual irrespective of age and sex gets recreation through movie. A majority of youth wants to watch films at theatre with their friends friendly. Elders watch films more in television than in theatres. During this age adolescents do not like to go films with their family members, where they do not find freedom. Hence in so many families the parents impose restrictions to go to theatre to watch movie with their friends.

Thus, generation gap refers to the difference, gap or conflict between adolescent children and their parents regarding values, attitudes and behaviour patterns. The problem of generation gap is universal. It has existed more or less in almost all societies at all times. It is because the parents are traditional and conservative, whereas the youth are modern and rebellious. As a result of this difference in nature between children and parents clashes occur between the two generations, moreover from the sociological view point. Children often grow up in a culture which is different from that of their parents. Everyone, including adults and the elderly are aware of the rapid social change, but adults fail to consider this rapid social change when they are interacting with children. Thus by failing to understand the society and the changed social atmosphere in which their children are growing up the parents often enforce rules and social behaviour of their own generation. This inevitably leads to generation gap issues.

The two generations live in different socio-cultural environments and experience different cultural standards. The two generations live under the influence of different styles of living, foods, media, technology, beliefs, attitude and values. Therefore generation gap is naturally a cultural gap. Today computers, the internet and other technology have made the society very complex, which cannot be fully understood by the older generation. Meanwhile they want to maintain status quo, which is very much opposed by youngsters, that leads to generation gap.

The conflict between the generations never continues permanently, but it comes to an end at particular age especially with the end of adolescence. Therefore, they continue to look to parents for basic values and guidance in areas of life such as personal and career goods with the passage time, they gain self-esteem and maturity. Most adolescents reach an understanding of universal realities. Then they return and accept the values which they once questioned.

Spirit of independence is the most important source of generation gap. By achieving independence youth want to establish a sense of identity. Majority of adolescents irrespective of sex prefer the company of their friends. In this modern society many college going students attend occasional parties, which may carry on until late in the night. The adolescents spend much time with their friends, which force to inculcate values and customs of peer group rather than parents, because during the stage of adolescence peer group is most powerful force in the socialization of an adolescent. The peer group moulds the attitudes, values and norms of the individuals, particularly adolescents. In urban areas the peer group enables the child to develop an autonomous behaviour and emancipation from the dominating influence of parents. This phenomenon is not always tolerated by the parents and results in generation conflict. This

leads to generation gap between the generations, where the young feel oppressed by their parents. As far as Indian society is concerned a sense of generational resentment is not been a dominant theme.

In India, industrial growth, urbanization, modernization and expansion of modern education have affected our traditional social institutions like family, caste, religion, marriage etc. The educated youth, who have developed new ideologies and values, feel that there is cultural lag between them and their parents. The parents and old generation want to keep traditional culture and way of life. But against to them the educated youth are on the way of inculcating new values, beliefs, sentiments and ideologies. Hence there is difference of opinions and conflicts between the younger and older generations.

Today in India particularly modern education has created modernized educated youth, who are against the old fashioned uneducated old people. Modern education accelerates the values of democracy, socialism and secularism, which have been inculcated in the minds of college going youths. Thus modern educated youth have developed the spirit of equality, justice, scientific and rational thinking. As a result the youth have been sensitized to modern attitudes and values than their parents who belong to the older generation and they are comparatively conservative and traditional in their behaviour. The old people are more attached to traditional norms and values than the younger. Therefore modern youth tend to give modernistic responses more than their parents, which have clearly indicated the symptom of existence of generation gap.

5. References

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