

# Generational Differences in Values of Sabzevari Residents

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## Abstract

This paper aims at comparing family value orientations of two generations aged 18-35 and 36-55. Through cluster sampling, 398 married individuals were randomly selected to participate in the study in Sabzevar city. Results indicate that there is a significant relationship between generation and family values with the older generation being more conservative of family values. The result of multiple regression analysis shows that the three independent variables of sex, education, and generation used in the model explain 32 percent of the variance in the dependent variable. It means that women with higher levels of education and members of younger generation are more liberal in their value orientations. These findings show that new generations accept more gender equity values in families. Gender is the most important predictor of value orientations, and education as an achieved feature has a great impact on the acceptance of new values.

**Keywords:** Generation gap, Values, Education, Conservative, Attitude

## Introduction

Values and norms have an important role in the solidarity of groups and societies. When values face challenges, social order is threatened. Social

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changes can be attributed to various groups, classes, and factors. One of the most important factors of value transformation is ageing. Naturally, as people get older their values, norms, attitudes and behaviors change so generations differ substantially in terms of their values and norms.

From a functional view, dynamics of generational succession may be considered as a mechanism through which society finds its balance between stability and change. Mannheim (1952) believes that without generations there would not be any changes in society. From Mannheim's point of view, social changes are brought about by generations (as cited in Kohli, 1996).

In the modern societies, orientation of generations has changed dramatically. Social changes occur more rapidly, widely and intensively in modern period in comparison with pre-modern era (Giddens, 1990). Furthermore, in contrast to pre-modern times when children got married as soon as they reached puberty, children in modern world experience a new period of adolescence which is defined by more social mobility and personal independence. These make their values and attitudes to be different from and even opposed to those of their parents. In addition to the noted factors, the influences of industrialization and modern societies have created significant generation gaps in modern time. (Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997).

In a developing society like Iran where the youth compose a big part of the population, modernization forces have caused great socioeconomic changes. Iran, with its young population, has experienced great events such as the revolution and the war. Therefore, the study of generations values sounds necessary.

The present article investigates the orientations of two generations towards some issues related to family values such as divorce, way of choosing spouse, preference for a son, women employment, etc. Due to deep socioeconomic changes in recent decades, we expect the new generation to be more liberal towards these values.

The term generation has at least four meanings: first, it is used to distinguish cohorts, representing a group of people born at a similar time. Second, in kinship studies, it is related to the lineage between grandparents, parents, and children. Third, it refers to a measure of time representing the number of years between the age of parents and children,

and finally, Kohli's (1996) conception of welfare generations which are defined according to the sequence of education, work and retirement (Attias-Donfut & Arber, 2000).

Age is an important variable which has a great impact on individuals' lives. Different ages are corresponding to different abilities, and various stages of physiological, psychological and social development (Mooney et al., 2000). In this study we distinguish two generations according to the age variable. In macro level, this division is in accordance with an important event, i.e. the imposed war. The formative years (Schuman and Scott, 1984) of the younger generation were influenced by war consequences while the older generation managed war and directly experienced it.

### **Literature Review**

Studies on family values, especially egalitarian gender attitudes, are well documented. Olson et al. (2007) indicate that attitudes towards gender equality in Croatia, Poland, and Russia have recently changed due to improved economic condition. In China, for example, democratic attitudes about gender are unevenly distributed in different dimensions. There is a universal support for women's marriage rights, but son preference is still prevalent (Guilmoto, 2009).

In the United States, generation differences in gender attitudes account for the consistent shift in an egalitarian direction between 1970s and 1990s, although some of the attitudes remained unchanged (Cotter et al., 2011). Pimentel (2006) argues that husbands of younger married cohorts hold more conservative gender attitudes than those of older cohorts. Sho and Zho (2012), in a study on orientations toward gender equality, indicate that members of the younger cohorts of both sexes hold the most liberal attitudes. They argue that positive effect of college education has increased over time. Lin (2011) indicates that women's aspiration for college education is under the influence of family background and traditional gender values.

Teimoori (2001) investigated the value system of fathers and sons in Tehran. Six dimensions were taken into account to examine value differences including scientific, economic, social, and political dimensions. Results showed that there was a positive relationship between the social status of a family and economic, art, and political

values of the youth. However, this relationship is negative for the religious and social values. Moreover, the highest difference between fathers and sons emerged in the social and religious values. He concluded that generation gap was a common phenomenon in the studied society.

Azad Armaki et al. (2001) studied social and cultural developments over three generations of Tehrani families. The findings indicated that families have been able to convey marriage traditions and ceremonies to the next generation. Some prevailing values such as son child preference and pre-marriage friendship between young boys and girls have changed in new generations.

Askari Nodooshan et al. (2009) examined different value orientations toward marriage and family between two generations of mothers and daughters in Yazd city. The result of their survey showed that the two generations agree on the ideal age of marriage and oppose polygamy. However, there are significant differences toward consanguineous marriage, celibacy, and timing of the first child as well as the way of selecting a partner. They concluded that these intergenerational differences are due to generational displacement and ideational changes because of wide-spreading education, women's employment and urban life.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Generally, socio-economic and ideational changes are two causes of the change of values. To explain the material and nonmaterial changes, the emphasis of modernization theories is on modernizing processes such as urbanization, communications, education systems etc. From the viewpoint of human agency, the emphasis is on idea and attitude transformations through the spread of individualization, secularization, gender equity, etc.

The first significant conceptualization of the sociology of generations belongs to Mannheim. In his article "the problem of generations", age group or generation determines the fundamental orientations, evaluations and thoughts of people (cited in Coser, 1971). He argues that generations not only relate to being born in the same time, but that "those who live through a period of rapid social change develop a separate historical social conscience which influences their attitudes and behaviors and

distinguishes them from preceding generations" (Attias-Donfut & Arber, 2000, p. 2).

In contrast with Mannheim who represents the concept of generation in a macro level, Kohli has described it in the frame of family structure. He employed the term "welfare generations" which are "the product of institutionalization of society into distinct ages, defined according to the sequence of education, work and retirement" (Attias-Donfut & Arber, 2000, p. 2).

According to Kohli (1996), generation affects all orientations of people. The impact of this variable on the dependent variable, i.e. family value orientations, has been investigated in this study. Moreover, the relationship between this variable and other variables such as sex, employment status, birthplace (rural /urban), income, and education is also assessed. Among these variables, education which relates to ideational changes in the level of agency and birthplace is a structural feature which greatly reflexes the effects of one of the most effective forces of modernization process that is urbanization. Education is hypothesized to have a positive relationship with liberal values. Gender, on the other hand, is affected by the crystallization of patriarchal values of a society. Thus, regarding family values, men are expected to be different from women.

Addressing Materialism and Post-materialism values across generations in western societies, Inglehart (1990) poses two hypotheses of scarcity and socialization. According to scarcity hypothesis, individuals pursue different goals in a hierarchical order. This is influenced by Maslow's theory of hierarchy of human needs. He believes that materialistic goals such as hunger, thirst, and physical security have priority over post-materialistic goals like freedom, esteem, and autonomy. According to socialization hypothesis, the relationship between material conditions and value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment. A huge body of evidence indicates that people's basic values are largely fixed when they reach adulthood, and change relatively little thereafter.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The objectives of this study are hypothesized as follows:

There is a difference between generations, in terms of their family values.

There is a difference between males and females in terms of their family values.

There is a difference between rural- and urban-born individuals in terms of their family values.

There is a relationship between age and family values.

There is a relationship between employment and family values.

There is a relationship between income and family values.

There is a relationship between education and family values.

### **Data and Method**

Sabzevar is the second most populated city in Khorasan Razavi province northeast of Iran. The population of the city is 149327 which was considered as the target population in this study. A sample of 398 participants at the age of 18-65 was selected through multistage cluster sampling.

The data were collected through questionnaires. Skillful researchers helped in administering the questionnaires. Before administering the test, the reliability and validity of the instrument were established. The analysis of the pre-test showed an Alpha Cronbach of more than 0.8. Some sociologists and university professors confirmed the face validity of the scale. The questionnaire was administered under uniform conditions by experienced interviewers in the field. Data collection started in July and ended in September 2011.

It is stated that values are desired things which are not observable directly and are shown in the moral discourse and articulation of attitudes and orientations (Van Deth & Scarborough, 1995).

### **Results**

Table 1 depicts that the mean of value orientations among younger generation is significantly lower than that of old generation. That is younger generation is more liberal in family values. The results of the study show that mean difference is significant in five items: The younger generation do not prefer a son child as much as the old one; they do not agree to marry among relatives as much as the old generation do; they limit women's tasks to house work less than their parents; and relative to

old generation, they estimate that the success of an arranged marriage (by parents) is less.

Table 1. T-test of Family Value Orientations between Two Generations

Items of dependent variable	Generation	Mean	T-value	Significance
Working out of house is not good for women	Younger	2.52	1.71	0.009
	Older	2.75		
Son child is honor for family	Younger	2.62	4.05	0.000
	Older	3.15		
It is better to select spouse among relatives	Younger	2.38	3.33	0.001
	Older	2.77		
women duty must be only childbearing and house-holding	Younger	1.94	4.04	0.000
	Older	2.44		
- Good marriage is one that parents choose their children mate	Younger	2.45	2.46	0.015
	Older	2.75		
The best work for women is house work	Younger	2.43	2.65	0.008
	Older	2.77		
Divorce is bad	Younger	3.21	0.49	0.620
	Older	3.28		
Premarital friendship between girls and boys leads to a better marriage and life.	Younger	2.53	0.79	0.431
	Older	2.42		
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Younger</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>0.000</b>
	<b>Older</b>	<b>23.45</b>		

Table 2 indicates that the mean of value orientations among men is significantly higher than women and people born in rural areas have achieved a higher mean than urban-born people have. The study indicates that there is no significant relationship between job status and value orientations.

Among younger generation, there is a significant difference between men and women in their value orientations in the sense that women are more liberal. However, the relationships between birthplace and job status with the dependent variable are not significant.

In the older generation, men are more conservative (less liberal) than women. Furthermore, people born in rural areas have achieved higher score than individuals born in city. There is no significant relationship between job status and the dependent variable.

Table 2. T-test of Family Values according to Sex, Birthplace, and Job Status

	Independent variables	Frequency	Mean	T-value	Significance
<b>Total</b>	Male	170	24.21	4.56	0.000
	Female	198	20.36		
	Urban	263	21.35	5.09	0.000
	Rural	91	24.56		
	Employed	181	22.57	1.72	0.081
	Unemployed	167	21.59		
<b>Young Generation</b>	Male	75	23.19	5.21	0.000
	Female	125	19.68		
	Urban	161	20.72	1.88	0.061
	Rural	32	22.50		
	Employed	91	21.55	1.42	0.158
	Unemployed	64	23.44		
<b>Old Generation</b>	Male	92	24.90	4.12	0.000
	Female	71	21.58		
	Urban	99	22.50	3.43	0.001
	Rural	57	25.47		
	Employed	87	23.45	0.01	0.990
	Unemployed	64	23.44		

Table 3 illustrates Pearson coefficients between independent variables and value orientation. This univariate analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between age and value orientations. There is a negative relationship between education and value orientation so that people who are more educated are less conservative. There is no significant relationship between income and value orientations. The positive relationship between age and the dependent variable was expected since modernization process develops increasingly and influences the younger generations more.

For the younger generation, there is a significant relationship between independent variables including age, education, and value orientations. While the increase of age has a positive impact on conservative values, education has a negative impact on the dependent variable. The Pearson coefficient for education is considerable (-0.34).

Table 3. Correlation test of Independent Variables and Dependent Variable.

	Independent variables	Pearson coefficient	Significance level
<b>Total</b>	Age	0.26	0.000
	Income	0.01	0.867
	Education	- 0.31	0.000
<b>Young Generation</b>	Age	0.15	0.03
	Income	-0.002	0.978
	Education	-0.34	0.000
<b>old Generation</b>	Age	0.08	0.308
	Income	-0.15	0.102
	Education	-0.21	0.006

For the old generation as the young one, the relationship between education and value orientation is significant. The other two independent variables are not significantly related to the dependent variable. Comparing the relationship between education and value orientation of the older generation with that of the younger generation shows that the impact of education is higher for the former.

Table 4 illustrates the results of multiple regressions analysis. Three independent variables remain in the model and explain 32 percent of the value orientations variance. It means that women, more educated people, and members of the younger generation are more liberal in their value orientations.

Table 4. Distribution of Delinquency by Occupation

	Step	Variables	$\beta$	R2	STD.Err or	T-Value	Sig	Tolerance
<b>Total</b>	1	Sex	0.39	0.21	0.79	5.00	0.000	0.95
	2	Education	-0.23	0.28	0.10	-2.95	0.004	0.92
	3	Generation	0.20	0.32	0.98	2.62	0.010	0.94

<b>Younger Gen.</b>	1	Sex	0.59	0.23	1.07	5.40	0.000	0.79
	2	Income	-0.24	0.28	0.002	-2.16	0.034	0.79

<b>Older Gen.</b>	1	Birthplace	0.50	0.17	1.42	3.90	0.000	0.94
	2	Sex	0.32	0.31	1.41	2.48	0.017	0.93

The results of multiple regressions for younger generation show that two variables were stable in the model: sex and income. Thus, women and people with higher income are more liberal in their value orientations. These two variables explain 28 percent of the variance of dependent variable. The third part of the table depicts the results of multiple regressions for the older generation. Two independent variables i.e. birthplace and sex, remain in the model and explain 31 percent of the variance of the value orientations.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the present study, we compared the orientations of two generations toward some family values such as divorce, way of choosing spouse, son child preference, women employment etc. Due to the deep socioeconomic changes in Iranian society during recent decades, we expect that the new generation be more moderate towards these values than the older one. For this purpose, 398 married individuals were randomly selected through cluster sampling to participate in the study in Sabzevar city. Based on their age, respondents were divided into two generations ° the younger generation aged 18-35 and older one aged 36-55.

Results show that the younger generation is more liberal towards family values. This finding is in accordance with findings of Askari Nodooshan et al. (2009). Under the influences of modernization process, the rigid, patriarchal values and norms have been undermined and more egalitarian ones have replaced them. This replacement of values is accelerated with demographic transition in which a numerable generation was born during 1979-1989 who carries new values.

Similar to Azad Armaki et al. (2001), our findings indicated that the younger generations do not prefer son child as much as the older one. The transformation of agricultural ways of earning to industrial activities and rise of insurance systems have undermined son preference ideas. However, the most helpful force belongs to development of educational systems especially higher education. The high level of women's enrolment in universities explains our finding that women are more liberal in their value orientations than men are. Women who are more discriminated against by the traditional patriarchal values are more affected by ideational changes resulting from education.

As stated, younger generations do not favor consanguineous marriages as much as the old generations do. In recent decades, with the growth of communication, education, and migration, marriage with nonrelatives has increased considerably.

The results of correlation tests offer negative significant relationship between education and value orientation ( $R = -0.3$ ). This independent variable explains many social changes in society. During the first decade after revolution, primary education expanded to most rural areas and simultaneously, many universities were established all over the country. However, since employment opportunities for women did not developed, the only way for women to participate in social life was through continuing their education. The result has been an uneven growth of women's educational index without equal development in their employment rate, which could bring about some challenges to the society.

As multiple regression analysis showed the three variables, i.e. sex, education, and generation, entered the model. Sex is an important ascribed feature which traditionally determines many aspects of social life. Since women experience more limitations in society, they welcome new values more easily than men do. The second variable, education, is one of the most important elements of ideational change. Finally, the study indicated that age is a good determinant of value orientation in the society. As Mannheim theorized, the impact of this variable seems to be higher in a society which is experiencing great social changes.

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