

Extended Abstract: Sociological Explanation of Generational Gap Based on Religious Dimensions with an Emphasis on Cyberspace in Zargan, Fars Province (Mothers born in the 1970s and Daughters born in the 2000s)

Fariba Farhadbar¹, Alireza Khodami², Majid Rezakarimi³

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Extended Abstract

Introduction and Problem Statement

The transition from a traditional to a modern society in Iran has brought about significant social, cultural, and technological changes, particularly with the proliferation of cyberspace. These transformations have led to shifts in lifestyles, attitudes, and values across different generations. Such rapid changes often result in a generational gap, especially concerning religious values, as younger generations adopt new perspectives influenced by digital environments. This study aims to sociologically examine this generational gap, focusing on religious dimensions among two distinct groups in Zargan, Fars Province: mothers born in the 1970s (Dah-e 50) and their daughters born in the 2000s (Dah-e 80). The central objective is to compare their religiosity and investigate the role of cyberspace in shaping their religious beliefs and practices, thereby addressing whether a value gap exists and how digital spaces contribute to the religious orientations of these two generations.

The concept of a generational gap is crucial here, referring to the differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors between people of different age groups, often arising from distinct historical and social experiences. In the context of Iran, where religious adherence has traditionally been strong, understanding how modern influences, especially the pervasive nature of cyberspace, impact religiosity is vital. The internet and social media platforms offer new avenues for information, social interaction, and identity formation, potentially leading to diverse interpretations and expressions of religious faith among younger individuals compared to their parents. This research, therefore, seeks to provide empirical evidence for these shifts, contributing to the broader understanding of social change and its effects on religious life in contemporary Iranian society.

1. Organizational position: PhD student, sociology field, social harms field, Jahrom Islamic Azad University, Fars Province, Iran. Email: farhadbar.fariba62@gmail.com  0009-0005-5618-0260

2. Organizational position: Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Islamic Azad University, Jahrom Branch, Fars Province, Iran. Email: khoddamy@jia.ac.ir  0000-0003-4700-9355

3. Organizational position: Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Islamic Azad University, Jahrom Branch, Fars Province, Iran (Corresponding Author). Email: karimi@jha.ac.ir  0000-0002-2329-7703

Theoretical Framework

This study integrates theoretical perspectives from Durkheim, Glock and Stark, and Dobbelaere to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding religiosity and generational gaps.

Émile Durkheim's perspective emphasizes religion as a social phenomenon, a force instilled by the group upon its members, fostering collective consciousness and social cohesion. For Durkheim, religious practices and beliefs reinforce shared moral values and social solidarity. While his work primarily focused on traditional societies, his insights into the social functions of religion remain relevant for analyzing how communities maintain or alter their religious fabric amidst social change.

Glock and Stark's multidimensional model of religiosity is particularly central to this research. They propose that religiosity is not a monolithic concept but comprises five distinct dimensions:

- Belief (Ideological): Adherence to core religious doctrines and tenets (e.g., belief in God, prophets, sacred texts).
- Practice (Ritualistic): Participation in religious rituals, ceremonies, and services (e.g., prayer, fasting, pilgrimage).
- Knowledge (Intellectual): Understanding of religious history, scriptures, and teachings.
- Experience (Experiential): Personal feelings, sensations, and encounters with the divine (e.g., spiritual experiences, a sense of closeness to God).
- Consequence (Consequential): The impact of religious beliefs and practices on daily life, ethical conduct, and social behavior.

This multidimensional approach allows for a nuanced comparison of religiosity between generations, revealing specific areas of convergence or divergence rather than a simple 'more' or 'less' religious assessment.

Dobbelaere's theory of secularization describes a structural process where societal institutions become increasingly independent of religious control, leading to changes at the levels of religion, individuals, and society. While Iran is not a fully secularized society in the Western sense, aspects of this theory help interpret how modernity and cyberspace might diminish the direct influence of religious institutions on daily life and individual decision-making, leading to a more individualized or diverse religious landscape.

Karl Mannheim's historical generation approach views generations as embodiments of distinct intellectual and cultural orientations shaped by specific socio-historical events. Rapid and extensive societal changes create "generation-conscious groups" that share unique experiences and worldviews. The differing historical contexts of the 1970s and 2000s generations in Iran—with the latter growing up in the digital age—provide a clear basis for observing such generational distinctions.

Pierre Bourdieu's generational approach frames generational gaps as horizontal and structural conflicts rooted in an imbalanced distribution of power and resources, which threaten the objective interests of each generation. This conflict moves from the ideological to the material, affecting social positions and opportunities. In the Iranian context, this framework helps analyze how differing access to or engagement with digital resources might create new forms of social stratification and cultural capital, impacting religious expression.

Combining these theories, the study uses Glock and Stark's model, adapted with a localized questionnaire by Hossein Serajzadeh, to comparatively study religious compo-

nents between daughters and mothers. The theoretical model thus becomes a fusion of Dobbelaere's secularization (as a context for changing religious influence) and Glock and Stark's multidimensional religiosity (for measuring and comparing religious commitment), further informed by generational theories from Mannheim and Bourdieu to understand the broader social dynamics at play.

Research Methodology

This quantitative, survey-based research was conducted in Zargan, Fars Province, to measure and compare the religiosity of mothers and daughters. A library-based approach was used to gather theoretical concepts, literature reviews, and previous research. Data collection was performed using a questionnaire with Likert-scale items, focusing on individual characteristics, making the individual the unit of analysis.

The statistical population comprised teenage daughters (representing the 2000s generation) currently studying in middle schools, and their mothers (representing the 1970s generation). A multi-stage cluster sampling method was employed to select 313 participants. These were divided into two groups: 167 daughters and 146 mothers.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha through SPSS software. The results (Table 2 in the original document) showed high alpha values for most dimensions of religiosity, indicating strong internal consistency:

- Belief Dimension: 0.80
- Ritual Dimension: 0.81
- Knowledge Dimension: 0.81
- Experiential Dimension: 0.79
- Consequence Dimension: 0.53
- Overall Religiosity: 0.83

The relatively low alpha for the "Consequence Dimension" (0.53) led to the removal of two questions from this section, resulting in a final 48-item questionnaire. This adjustment aimed to improve the overall reliability of the measure, ensuring that the instrument accurately captured the intended constructs.

Findings and Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using statistical techniques including t-tests, correlation coefficients, and ANOVA.

Overall Religiosity by Group

The findings reveal a clear distinction in overall religiosity between the two groups. Mothers generally exhibit higher levels of religiosity compared to daughters. This trend is evident across most dimensions, where mothers show stronger adherence.

Belief Dimension: This was identified as the strongest dimension of religiosity for both mothers and daughters.

Consequence Dimension: Conversely, this was the weakest dimension for both groups, indicating that while beliefs might be strong, their direct behavioral outcomes or impact on daily life might be less pronounced.

Comparative Analysis of Dimensions

When comparing the five dimensions of religiosity:

Mothers consistently demonstrated higher religiosity in four dimensions: Consequence,

Belief, Ritual, and Experiential.

Daughters showed stronger religiosity only in the Knowledge Dimension. This suggests that while younger generations might have greater access to religious information and a better understanding of religious concepts (perhaps through digital platforms), their active engagement in rituals, personal experiences, and the behavioral manifestation of faith might be less than their mothers.

Cyberspace Use and Religiosity

A crucial finding concerns the relationship between social media use and religiosity. The research indicates a significant and inverse relationship between the extent of social network use and religiosity. This means that as the hours spent on social media increase, the level of religiosity tends to decrease.

Usage Patterns: Daughters spend significantly more time on social media (with the highest percentage spending over 5 hours daily) compared to mothers (whose highest percentage falls into the "less than one hour" category).

Correlation: The Pearson correlation coefficient between social media use and overall religiosity was found to be -0.416, indicating a strong negative correlation. This suggests that increased digital engagement is associated with lower religiosity scores. When controlling for the variable of "mother/daughter role," this coefficient decreased to -0.056, implying that while social media use affects both, the generational factor plays a substantial role in mediating this relationship, highlighting the existing gap in religiosity scores under the influence of cyberspace.

Conclusion

This study successfully identified a generational gap in religious dimensions between mothers born in the 1970s and daughters born in the 2000s in Zargan, Fars Province. Mothers generally display higher overall religiosity, particularly in the consequential, belief, ritualistic, and experiential dimensions. Daughters, however, exhibit stronger knowledge-based religiosity. The research strongly highlights the significant and inverse relationship between the use of social networks and religiosity, indicating that increased engagement with cyberspace is associated with lower levels of religious adherence.

These findings suggest that while the younger generation may be more knowledgeable about religious topics, the pervasive influence of digital environments potentially leads to a more individualistic and less ritually or consequentially driven form of religiosity compared to their parents. The role of cyberspace emerges as a critical factor in shaping these generational differences, mediating how religious values are perceived, internalized, and practiced. This research provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of social change, intergenerational relations, and the evolving landscape of religiosity in modern Iranian society. Future studies could explore the specific content and interactions within cyberspace that contribute to these observed trends.

Keywords: Socio-cultural status, Dimensions of religiosity, Generational gap, Mothers born in the 1970s, Daughters born in the 2000s, Cyberspace