

The interaction of generations in modern Russia

Khairullina Nursafa Gafurovna and Sadykova Hadia Nurgalievna

Tyumen State Oil and Gas University, Volodarskogo Str., 38, Tyumen, 625000, Russia

Abstract. This article provides a theoretical and practical analysis of the issue of intergenerational interaction in Russia as a whole and through the example of the population of Tyumen Oblast in particular. To study intergenerational interactions, the author has analyzed the results of a questionnaire survey conducted in 2014 among 700 residents of the South of Tyumen Oblast. This has helped formulate the following inferences. Firstly, issues of social life activity are perceived by all generations virtually identically, while variances are due to the maximalism of the young and the nostalgic reminiscences of the older generation. Secondly, the highest degree of pessimism is observed in persons of the medium age group, i.e. the professionally socialized portion of the population. Thirdly, the author substantiates the proposed hypothesis on the cyclicity of values and mindsets, which characterizes the problematics of intergenerational interaction in terms of communicative difficulties and not age contradictions, etc.

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Introduction

In European – and, more broadly, Western – history, the generation as a concept was problematicized in the egalitarian context of the 18th century revolutions and is associated with the utopian notions of “new man”, new mankind, new people, etc. [1-5].

In Russian philosophical and sociological literature, interest towards the issue of generations arose in the 1960s. B.Ts. Ulanis views the term “generation” as a certain age category, an aggregate of persons of the same age. The year of birth common to a certain group joins the people into a sort of single entity. Note that people with the same year of birth experience all historical events at the same age. At the same age, they react to them, experience their impact on themselves, and perceive the breath of history [6].

I.S. Kon views the term “generation” from the general sociological standpoint. The term “generation” is polysemantic. In this regard, Kon classifies the meaning of the term “generation” as follows:

1. The degree of descent from a common ancestor (the genealogical generations of fathers, sons, grandfathers, grandsons, etc.);
2. Coevals, i.e. persons born at the same time and, therefore, being at any moment in life at the same age (the real generation or age cohort);
3. Contemporaries, i.e. persons of different age living concurrently (the nominal generation). Note that nominal generations can be constructed both based on the chronological, calendar principle (“the 1920s generation”) and symbolically, through the association with particular historical

events (“the October Revolution generation”), prominent personalities (“the Pushkin generation”), or an attributed system of values (“the Storm and Stress generation”, “the Lost Generation”).

A space of time over which a given generation is functioning, in demography the length of a generation is determined as the mean of the age difference between parents and children within a certain period, which is calculated separately for the male and female generation; the duration of “symbolic generations” in the history of culture is determined intuitively, being 15 to 30 years [7].

A.I. Afanasiev draws attention to such attributes of the “generation” as the age differentiation and character of social activity. He believes that the age factor is one of the main attributes of the generation, which is construed as an intrinsic original measure of natural division of people into generations, with the generation and the age group being terms that are not identical. Sociologically speaking, the generation encompasses several age groups, but the boundaries of generations here are mobile and depend on historical, social-economic, demographic, and regional factors [8].

I.M. Ilyinsky marks out three variants for the use of the term, and hence three theoretical approaches towards youth as a sort of social phenomenon: 1. Generations are viewed in the sense of the lifecycle individuals pass through. The classic sociological approach addresses the impact of society on youth. 2. Social or political generations are socially and historically substantiated structures of group behavior. 3. Genealogical generations come to the fore when the issue of youth is viewed through the relationships and generations of parents and

children, which can sociologically transform into a collision or rift between them [9].

It should be noted that the term's having multiple meanings leads to the use of it in various variants used in particular sectors of knowledge. The analysis of theoretical material focuses the author's attention on the variety of forms and mechanisms of intergenerational interaction in any historical periods and the fact that this interaction is determined by natural-historical factors in the development of society [10], as well as artificial techniques (in the area of the state's social policy) for increasing (or decreasing) the efficacy of intergenerational communications [11].

For the sake of the study of intergenerational interactions, let us carry out an interpretation of the results of the questionnaire survey conducted in 2014.

Assessing the dynamics of changes taking place is also topical to the determination of the degree to which generational groups adapt to transformations within the economic and social sphere. It was revealed that with age "optimism withers" in assessments from 71.4% with young to 28% with older people, which is due to differences in assessment mechanisms, when the older generation compares the present state with their past (the Soviet period), with the economy not seen by them as a dominant.

Whereas the young compare the opportunities they have in Russia with those there are overseas, justly believing in having wide prospects of social and professional socialization, and the strictly economic factor, consequently, prevails with this age group. There is an inverse proportion in extreme negative assessments.

The loss of the value of the family and significance of kinship is a made-up fact disproved by this study. Unanimity in opinions on the mutual support of closely related people was recorded in all the age groups within the limits of 55.1-76.5%. And if to youth this interaction is seen as rather material (financial) support, in older age groups this need takes on the form of moral and communicative influence – this is why the value of the family acquires with age a different content and "physical filling" through the transformation of the "channels" of rapport, their role and significance in the process of life activity.

All the more intriguing are the survey's results on important and lost values, in terms of which, under a consolidated gender assessment, a fourth of the respondents (23.5% of males and 26.6% of females) point to the loss of traditional family stability, with the family itself (as an absolute value) not holding high positions in the list of priorities. But "personal happiness in the family" is an

unconditional leader in the hierarchy of values, yet the loss of this value too is recorded by a small portion of the respondents (16.7% and 13.5% respectively). One should fine-tune (correct) the analytical approach, which requires that we realize the fact that the perception of the significance (importance) and topicalness of the loss of a particular value is formed based on not only static but dynamic variables, i.e. the understanding of each separate value within a particular generation is associated with complex, oftentimes integral factors. In other words, for instance, "happiness in the family" is determined in the correlation of "I" and "We" and, consequently, has various motivation and behavioral mindsets both in the gender and age aspect.

Youth find an internal threat coming from reforms implemented by the government both in the system of education and bringing-up under the influence of Western ideology and the political system. The older generation is more "careful with their opinions" as they believe that all the proposed variants (reasons) happen to exist virtually with equal facility. Nevertheless, such reasons as social and economic reforms carried out by the authorities, Russia's entry into the global community (globalization), changes in the system of education and bringing-up, and the severance of bonds between generations have rather the gender different, while others – age (generational).

On the strength of the structured opinion of the respondents, the authors have concretized the system of issues substantiated by generational differences.

In answering this question, there is obvious polarization in the methodological approach of the respondents, i.e. the young "put their trust in" various value mindsets, while "old men" do in the difference in life experience, and if the former set their judgments into a formal (static) frame, the latter do into a process (dynamic) one – when youth are not "willing to listen and learn". This is a conceptual inference, since differentiation is traced across other aspects and existing intergenerational pre-mindsets do not allow us to concretize and analyze the real reasons behind difficulties in the interaction of generations. It is apparent that the issue was pointed up in the sphere of communicative exchange and there are difficulties in this sphere.

Satisfaction with one's relationship with one's parents was unanimously voiced by the majority, with some younger respondents (age 15-17) being somewhat skeptical. Relationships with the older generation (grandmothers and grandfathers) demonstrate an increase in the degree of dissatisfaction and the depth of contradictions

especially among extreme generations. The inverse information flow – relationships with children – is adequate to the above. The situation is the same when it comes to relationships with friends.

Projecting one's future and the future of the country one lives in is a characteristic that helps identify the degree of impact of positive and negative factors on each age group (generation), which subsequently can be used as secondary analysis in choosing a way of social development.

It should be supposed that both the wording of the question and the perception of the term "future" are associated in the minds of the population with the quality and level of youth's education (development), with the process of assessment refracted through the perception of one's own children.

In the broadest strokes, the opinions of the respondents overlap, which points to the presence of a single mechanism for interpreting the data of the external environment. Thus, in the opinion of the majority, Russia's role in the international arena will be growing, but the influence of the West's evolutionary winds will have a substantial deforming impact, which will lead to growing pragmatism and a widening chasm between the incomes of the population. We may be expecting a decline in the value of the family in part also because sooner or later same-sex marriages will be legalized and that will affect the transformation of the foundational functions of the family. We are also witnessing the widening of a chasm between generations, which is associated with the increased pace of changes taking place. There is also an alarming fact associated with radicalization in the opinions of the youngest portion of the respondents, where 57.1% probably objectively reflect the existing positive and negative trends in their future status.

Totally different disproportions were recorded in answers to the question on the assessment of the generation following the current one. It is by the positive characteristic that the generational factor is manifested more clearly here – "I believe in them", as well as by the indicator "my heart goes out to them".

Confidence about one's own favorable future decreases in each of the previous generations, which is due to rather the temporal factor than real and objective reasons. It is apparent that young people whose whole life is before them have great expectations. However, more characteristic is the approximately equal portion of the respondents of each age group who are "not quite sure", i.e. the category and numbers of the population which "carry" their apprehensions through their entire life.

In this specific study, the author is interested in the problematics of relationships between generations through the prism of the worldviews of the respondents themselves – therefore, in answering the question on prospects the position and interactions of generations in terms of the cultural aspect in particular were clarified as well.

No intergenerational discrepancies were recorded on these answers. We can just state the fact that the "generational loop" (the cyclicity phenomenon) is manifested in the opinion of "the precedence impact of adults on youth" and the "isolatedness of generations"; "the traditions and experience of the older generation will be picked up by youth" (pessimism) and "the experience of parents will be unacceptable for children". And if the first two of the above loops are naturally explained by evolution and progress, the two following loops are factors that are alarming and call for correctional action on the existing trends of the loss of intergenerational interaction. So how much is unity manifested within the youth generational group as the groundwork of future society?

Interaction with coevals is telling based on assessments by youth themselves, since relationships with parents are not that important nowadays but will be gaining increased importance in the long view (42.9% versus 12% of persons older than 61 by the same indicator). The explanation, in the author's view, "lies on the surface", when differences are associated with different interpretation of the nature of these relationships. Youth place emphasis on the potential of such interaction, i.e. itself the existence of the opportunity to communicate, especially on the more troublesome life collisions, already does it for them, while at the same time the older generation appeals to constant and continuous information exchange, believing that through the frequency and continuity of contacts one attains maximum efficacy of interaction, including cultural transmission as well. And it is not for no reason that the "generational loop" has been given increased attention.

42.9% of 17-year-olds believe that in forming future culture the norms not of parents but the "culture of grandfathers" will be taken as a basis. The difference of gender opinions is considerable due to that males rate their achievements and their experience higher as a necessary cultural heritage, while females justly believe that due to fast changes the older generation will have to learn from youth, which means they will have to adapt their views to the requirements of modern life. The older generation insists on the considerable conflictiveness of youth culture (52%), in part also because categoricalness and ultra extremism as considerable danger is recognized by the young themselves (42.9%).

Conclusions

Summing up the first stage of the analysis of empirical data, note the patterns discovered by the authors.

Firstly, issues of social life activity are perceived by all the generations virtually identically, while variances are due to the maximalism of the young and the nostalgic reminiscences of the older generation. Gender differences are so insubstantial that we can with a certain degree of generalization speak of similar transformations of the consciousness of males and females with the psychologically explainable domination of each gender in the practical or sensual/emotional spheres.

Secondly, the highest degree of pessimism is observed in persons within the medium age group, i.e. the professionally socialized portion of the population. Their negative assessments are associated with both technological factors (one's work schedule, chronic fatigue, monotony, etc.) and psychological disproportions, when the attainment of success depends on an unstable external environment.

Thirdly, the author substantiates the proposed hypothesis on the cyclicity of values and mindsets, which characterize the problematics of intergenerational interaction in terms of communicative difficulties and not age contradictions, as it is normally expressed in the proverbial formula "the conflict of fathers and sons".

Fourthly, the author registers basic values, which a priori are perceived by all generations as "axial" (pivotal) values, even if they do not change rank of priority in a particular age group. Such values include the family, which has by no means given away its positions but has taken on new roles, including those related to the symbolization of the successful socialization of the individual.

Fifthly, attempts to "synchronize" the paces of life of all generations are doomed to failure from the start. This is why the author sees as a topical dimension of enhancing (correcting) intergenerational

interaction the functional specialization of generations.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Khairullina Nursafa Gafurovna
Tyumen State Oil and Gas University,
Volodarskogo Str., 38, Tyumen, 625000, Russia

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