## Brief Communications

# Generation Gap: an exploration of causes and probable solutions

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The perception regarding existence of generation gap results in a conflict between different generations requiring effective solutions. Since the causes and solutions are culture specific no universal solution is possible. Therefore the present study is conducted in the Indian scenario to identify the causes and probable solutions to generation gap specific to Indian culture.

**Methodology:** The sample consisted of 100 males and females in the age group of 19 to 21 years from the city of Mumbai. A self-formulated questionnaire to measure perception about the causes and probable solutions to generation gap was administered.

**Results:** The study indicated a high level of perceived existence of generation gap as 96%, 70% & 90% of the sample endorsed the view of existence of intergenerational conflict, generation gap as a social problem & impact on different generations respectively. The main causes attributed to existence of generation gap were difference in perception (75%), rejection of old ways (57%), Intolerance (48%), non acceptance of rules and regulations set by elder generation & replacement of old value system (42%). 97% of the sample agreed that solutions could be generated.60% endorsed the solution of dialogue between generations, 40% agreed to debates & meetings between parties involved, 30% felt exposure to models, examples to solve generation gap would prove effective whereas 29% were of the view that educational institutions could play an important role.

**Conclusion:** Thus the problem of generation gap exists and can be solved in a wide variety of ways. The limitation of the study was the sample did not include people from older generation.

**Keywords**: generation gap, rejection, intolerance, elder generation, value system, intergenerational conflict.

## INTRODUCTION

Age & differences of age are among the most basic and crucial aspects of human life and human destiny. The differences of age termed as generation plays a crucial role in human life as it leads to generation gap or *generational gap* which is a difference of opinions between one generation and another regarding beliefs, politics, or values. This was noticed way back in the 1960s leading to the beginning of its study in the form of a sociological theory of generation gap [1].

According to sociological theory, each generation faces different historical events, culture, economic challenges and exposure, which shape their perception and mind set. Therefore when two different generations interact there is bound to be arguments and difference of opinion termed as generation gap [2]. Thus whenever there is a contrast in the exposure and experiences of generations more so in the 21st century where because of the technological revolution the younger generation is exposed to a globalized world they are prone to challenging their own traditional lifestyle, culture, value systems etc which is not appreciated by the older generation further aggravating the conflict within generations. Further these

conflicts are the consequence of urbanization, industrialization and family mobility which is more prevalent in the current century [3].

Another explanation is the one given by Erickson who stated that the older generation is in the generativity stage where they want to propagate their value system to the newer generation who are seeking independence and autonomy leading to a clash [4]. To aggravate the situation when any of these age groups is engaged in its primary activity, the individual members are physically isolated from people of other generations, with little interaction across age barriers except at the nuclear family level. This physical separation of the young and old has resulted in a lack of consistent intergenerational contact and growth of misperceptions and misunderstandings between the young and old [5] which is further accentuated by technological development specially the Internet age.

Thus the rapidly changing world, technological and scientific discoveries impact the lifestyle and thought processes of different generations thereby increasing the chasm between generations never seen in the past. Thus the problem of generation gap is here to stay leading to severe consequences therefore probable solutions need to be ascertained.

The area of generation gap has received wide spread curiosity leading to a lot of research in this area bringing out its possible causes and solutions. A study conducted on a sample consisting of both adolescents and elder generation found the existence of generation gap with the main reasons being lack of understanding and communication between them. In today's world technology hampers the interactions between generations [6]. In a research conducted on 1000 people belonging to four different generations it was found that each generation differed on the quality and quantity of technology use which effected their experiences and expectations leading to generation gap [7]. This view was endorsed by an American study which found 79% of the sample agreed to the existence of generation gap and the main difference was with regards to use of technology, value system and type of music [8]. Another study identified several areas where there was a difference of opinion among generations namely opinion on global warming, offshore drilling, nuclear power, childhood vaccines, untested medicine use laboratory test on animals and evolution [9]. Thus there seems to be enough evidence for the existence of generation gap, which needs to be resolved.

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study was to find out the causes and probable solutions to generation gap. The sample was 100 randomly selected adolescents in the age group of 19 to 21 years from the city of Mumbai. The tool used in the assessment was a self formulated questionnaire to measure the causes and solutions to generation gap. A descriptive analysis was conducted to find out the causes and solutions to generation gap and percentages were used to indicate the scores.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indian culture is collectivistic culture where family ties are very important as in majority of the cases people of different generations live together under the same roof giving the problem of generation gap high significance. Therefore the findings of this study are very crucial for understanding the intricacies of interaction between generations.

The findings of the study indicated that the perceived level of generation gap was extremely high as 96% of the respondents agreed that a conflict existed between generations whereas only 3% were of the opinion that there was no generation gap.64% agreed that it was a social problem. The positive aspect was that 87% agreed that problems due to generation gap could be lessened.

The main reasons for generation gap were the differences in perception (75%),rejection of old ways by younger generation (57%), Intolerance to each others ideas (48%),older values replacing newer values (42%) non acceptance of rules and regulations laid down by the elder generation (42%).

Majority of the respondents (97%) agreed that problems arising from generation gap could be lessened.

The probable solutions selected were dialogue between generations (60%), meetings, debates with all the parties involved in the conflict (40%),aid of examples, models &cases to solve the problem (30%) and discussion within educational institutions (29%).

The main reason for generations drawing further apart is technological inventions because of which there is lack of face-to-face communication within the generations so the highest rated solution is a dialogue between generations. Also when it comes to generation gap there are very few role models therefore small movies or anecdotes can prove very helpful this highlights the role of mass media in solving social problems. Educational institutes should encourage discussion and dialogue where the younger generation can air their concerns and be advised on how to respect and gel well with the elder generation [10].

Generation gap is here to stay and as the world undergoes tremendous upheavals and scientific discoveries the chasm between generations is going to widen further therefore the need of the hour is to formulate probable solutions to tackle the same.

The current research had many limitations. The sample size was restricted. The sample should consist of people from all over the country. The opinion of older generation should also be taken into account.

A module for tackling generation gap based upon the findings of the study should be devised with a pre test post test format.

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