RESEARCH PAPER

Generational Differences in Attitude and Lifestyle: A Study from Khulna City of Bangladesh

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ARTICLE HISTORY

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate the attitudinal variation and lifestyle pattern of three different age groups in Khulna city of Bangladesh. We collected data from 660 participants who were categorized as younger adults (aged between 20 to 29 years), middle-aged adults (aged between 30 to 49 years) and older adults (aged 50 years or above). Simple random sampling method was used for choosing participants and the data were collected through face-to-face interviews. It is evident from the study that there is a significant variation in attitude towards choices such as preferred government or marriage system to preferred career option and even music choices. The same was observed in terms of lifestyle of the three different groups as age was associated with wake-up time and sleeping time, smoking habit and TV channels they watched mostly. The results show that significant attitudinal and lifestyle differences exist among the different age groups implying greater generation gap.

Key words: Age**, a**ttitude**, g**eneration**s, l**ifestyle

Introduction

People from different generations exhibit fundamental variation in attitudes and values (Bolzan, 2003; Halyal & Mallappa, 1985). This variation ranges from attitudinal modernity to day to day life behavior indifferent age groups in our society. Besides age, racial/ethnic, gender, regional factors may also influence this attitude and lifestyle of the people. For example, there may be a significant difference across generations as to why people choose to live a vegetarian lifestyle (Pribis *et al.*, 2010). The intergenerational gap is more common in societies where traditional values and norms predominate in general.

Age inequality between different groups is a growing concern for many reasons now-a-days (Edmondson & Kondratowicz, 2009). In fact, generation gap can influence people's day to day life experience significantly as different factors including age, knowledge level, contact with older people, cultural influences etc influence people's perception largely. For example, the perceptions people hold of older people essentially impact the elderly in employment, education, and health services, and in the general treatment of older people (NCPOP, 2011). Attitude towards aged people also become more negative in the presence of physical and psychological difficulties (e.g. depression and dementia) among older people. Besides, social interaction plays an important role in changing the perception towards elderly in society. For example, healthcare professionals who have frequent social contact with older people report more positive attitudes to aging (Kishita *et al.*, 2016).

Similarly, younger people tend to believe that community perceptions towards them are often negative, and feel that they are more harshly judged than others. This perception may make them feel devalued and excluded, and reduce their confidence and self-esteem. Living with negative attitudes could also undermine their self-respect to the extent that the attitudes became 'self-fulfilling prophecies' because they create anger in young people (Stricker & Hillman, 1996). On the other hand, positive experiences may result when they feel affirmed and valued by the adults. Such positive attitudes can be experienced in the context of meaningful relationships with adults who are close to them. The nature of community attitudes towards young people can be regarded as a central factor in determining younger people's perception towards life (Bolzan, 2003).

The generation gap is a universal phenomenon these days. It can be observed irrespective of ethnic, religious or national identity. It is obvious that parents want to control the attitudes and lifestyle of their children while children always strive towards independence which ultimately results in a gap between generations (Tyyska, 2001). Younger generations prefer modern and technologically advance values instead of older fashions and objects. This ever-changing feature further accelerates the gap among generations and leaves us to 'generation hierarchy' which can be destructive to human society. Whatever the reasons are, one generation directly or indirectly blames the other for this ever-increasing gap between generations and empirical attempts to understand the scenario is necessary (Pew Research Center, 2009). More research on the nature of variation and their social implications is necessary to minimize the generation gap for a harmonious environment in our society.

Methods and Materials

We selected three major areas naming *Nutan Bazar* (under ward no. 22), *Dakshin Farazi Para* (under ward no. 24) and *Miah Para* (under ward no. 27) in Khulna City of Bangladesh through lottery method for this study. In order to select participants and collect data, we set two major criteria to identify the population. The criteria are as followed: (i) the participants must be residents of the study area and were included in the latest nationwide census carried out by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) (ii) The respondents were aged at least 20 years or above and categorized as younger adults (aged 20 to 29 years) middle-aged adults (aged 30 to 49 years) and older adults (aged 50 years and above). As per the national census report of 2011 (corrected report published in 2016), there live around 2356 people aged 20 years or above in our study area. Among them, 817 were aged between 20 to 29 years, 1082 were aged between 40 to 49 years and 457 were aged 50 years or above.

We determined a sample size of 660 out of this 2356 people (28% of the total population) and divided them in three generations (220 in each group) to maintain equal participation. For data collection, we used simple random sampling technique and followed survey research design. The process involved a semi-structured interview schedule containing both open and close-ended items. We pre-tested the interview schedule on 20 respondents before the final survey and corrected to remove anomalies found in the pilot survey. The data were later collected through face to face interview with the respondents by trained research staff during the month of March and April 2017. After completing the fieldwork, we re-checked the data for missing information and sorted them out to remove inconsistencies. Once re-checked, we recorded the variables and processed them for analysis through SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Science) and Microsoft Excel software. We conducted both univariate and bivariate analyses for descriptive information and drawing essential inferences between different variables.

Findings

Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

Of the 660 respondents, three-fourths (74.7%) were male and the rest were female in this study. Most of the respondents (80.3%) were married and a significantly lower portion (19.7%) were unmarried and either divorced or widower (Table 1). Half of the sample's family is constituted with joint family patterns and half are nuclear patterns. We found that one out of every ten respondents could neither read nor write, while around the same number of people attended only primary level of education (5 years of schooling). However, majority of the participants (54.5%) attended the secondary level of education (6 to 12 years of schooling) while rest of them participated in higher education (13 years of schooling or more). Majority of the respondents' monthly household income fell under lower two quartiles of the distribution suggesting a poor economic profile of the participants mostly. Due to low income of the respondents, most of them did not have any savings for future.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n=660)	Percent (%)
Age	Younger adults	220	33.3
	Middle aged adults	220	33.3
	Older adults	220	33.3
Marital Status	Married	530	80.3
	Others*	130	19.7
Family Type	Nuclear	326	49.4
	Joint	334	50.6
Educational Status	Can't read and write	72	10.9
	Primary	80	12.1
	Secondary	360	54.5
	Higher education	148	22.4
Household Income	Lowest quartile	184	27.8
	Second quartile	270	40.9
	Third quartile	130	19.7
	Highest quartile	76	11.6

* Unmarried, divorced, widower/widowed

Table 2. Attitude of the Respondents towards Different Choices

Variable	Age Group			Chi Squire	p Value
	Younger adults (%)	Middle aged adults (%)	Older adults (%)		
Preferred Govt. System					
Democratic	35.5	32.8	31.7	11.04	0.004
Non-democratic	17.5	37.5	45.0		
Preferred Marriage System					
Arranged marriage	25.2	31.1	43.7	91.39	0.000
Love marriage	54.3	39.1	6.5		
Preferred Medical Option					
Self-care	20.0	38.6	41.4		
Allopathic	36.3	32.8	30.9	8.24	0.080
Homeopathic	31.2	32.5	36.3		
Preferred Career					
Government job	35.5	34.4	30.1		
Non-government job	22.2	22.2	55.6	12.55	0.014
Business	26.2	30.8	43.1		
Preferred music					
Classical	4.1%	24.1%	71.7%	374.13	0.000
Modern	56.2%	40.5%	3.2%		

Table 3. Lifestyle of the Different Age Group People of Khulna City

Variable	Age Group			Chi Squire	p Value
	Younger adults (%)	Middle aged adults (%)	Older adults (%)		
Preferred TV Channel					
Sports	82.0	14.8	3.3		
News	12.9	75.7	11.4	395.96	0.000
Entertainment	42.7	26.4	30.9		
Religious	4.5	21.3	74.2		
Sleeping Time					
Early	7.2	33.8	59.0		
Mid-Night	40.9	40.9	18.1	240.09	0.000
Late Night	75.0	17.2	7.8		
Wake Up Time					
Early Moring	4.9	31.7	63.4		
Moring	22.5	53.3	24.2	408.93	0.000
Late Moring	88.5	8.0	3.4		
Smoking Habit					
Smoker	36.5	31.1	32.4	2.88	0.237
No-Smoker	30.4	35.4	34.2		
Regular Physical Exercise					
Yes	26.3%	34.1%	39.6%	16.96	0.000
No	40.1%	32.6%	27.3%		
Main Pastime Activities					
Hangout with Family	1.1%	48.9%	50.0%		
Hangout with Friends	56.2%	37.5%	6.2%		
Watching Television	9.6%	39.1%	51.3%	483.63	0.000
Listening Music	13.3%	60.0%	26.7%		
Social Media	94.6%	5.4%	0.0%		

Attitudinal Variation among the Respondents

We observed a significant variation among the age groups in terms of attitudinal aspects as results of the cross-tabulation show that democratic government system was preferred by all three groups although it was more popular among the younger adults and middle-aged adults slightly more than the older adults (Table 2). In terms of marital preferences, most of the older adults preferred to arrange marriage while most of the younger and middle-aged adults thought that love marriage is the better option for choosing life partners.

Allopathic treatment was preferred by most of the young adults and they reported not to be interested in self-care. Very few of the middle-aged adults would opt for either self-care or traditional treatment method but they mostly preferred the allopathic treatment over the other options. To the contrast, the majority of the aged people were very prone to take self-care and homeopathic treatment for health care seeking behavior. Most of the participants also said that they would prefer a government job as a career as they provide maximum

benefits in long run with highest security provided and only a few said they would prefer a non-government or business over the government jobs. In terms of music preferences, middle-aged and older adults would like the classical music. To the contrary, most of the younger adults preferred modern music besides they are not so much interested in classical music.

Variation in lifestyle

Not only the attitude towards different options but also the day-to-day lifestyle varies to a large extent for people from different age groups as well. This ranges from preference mass media to smoking behavior and many others. We found that that the younger adults were less interested in watching religious channels rather they mostly preferred sports channel to other alternatives. The middle-agedadults, however, watched news channels the most while the older aged preferred religious channels more than anything else. This behavior is derived from the fact that TV channels would keep the younger generations updated with the latest information and help in their job ultimately resulting in generation gap.

We observed that half of the younger adults would go to the bed late at night (after 12 AM) while middle-aged adults would mostly sleep around 10 PM to 12 AM at night. However, most of the respondents from older adults said that they would go for a sleep early at night (before 10 PM) and none of them reported to go to the bed late night. For wake-up time, the younger adults reported of getting late in waking up (after 9 AM) in the morning whereas middle-aged adults wake up from 7 to 9 AM mostly due to their job attendance in most cases. The older adults would wake up earlier though (before 7 AM) usually to enjoy the fresh air of the morning or attend morning prayers. Most of the younger adults and older aged reported of tobacco smoking although the tendency was relatively same observed among the middle-aged adults. Mostly the older aged people are taking physical exercise regularly whereas the younger adults are not much regular in this. On the contrary, a portion of middle-aged people are taking physical exercise similarly a portion are not interested. Overall, the association tests show relations between some lifestyle indicators like preferred TV channels, sleeping time, wake up time, physical exercise etc and the three different generations (p<.01) although smoking was not found to be a significant factor amongst the variables observed.

We also observed that there was a significant difference in terms of preferred pastime activities of the three age groups. As the findings indicate, young people were more likely to involve in social media mostly while older and middle-aged people were prone to pass their time with family or watching television. Interesting though, very few young people are interested to pass time with their friends leaving the social media aside. Findings also reveal that middle-aged and older people have little interest in listening to music while younger adults although less but have some interest in television prog.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if there exist significant intergenerational differences in terms of attitude and lifestyle of people. In this study, more than two-thirds of the respondents attended the upper two levels of education categorized. Since education is considered as a potential factor for attitudinal variation among people (Kaffashi & Tabrizi, 2011; Cunningham, 1973), we found that a relatively higher level of education caused greater attitudinal variety among the three groups. Most of the participants in this study had a lower income distribution where a majority portion of which was from older adults group. The findings comply with another study that suggests younger people with higher income and updated education usually enjoy higher levels of quality of life (Barry e*t al.,* 2009). The elderly, on the other hand, had to go through a lower standard of life as they are unable to work and often lead their lives in extreme poverty (McKerlie, 1992).

To identify the relationship between age and other attitudinal variables measured, we employed inferential tools of statistics. The results from association tests suggest that preferences regarding the government system, marriage type and even music patterns are associated with age of the people. Younger people tend to support democratic systems or communist ideology mostly whereas older people would largely support conservative ideologies in this study. The findings correspond with similar studies on political preferences and age differences of people in society (Maniam & Smith, 2017; Evans & Norris, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2011). For career preferences government job was the most preferred career choice for all three groups. However, the younger and middle-aged adults preferred government job more in general whereas one out of each four older adults thought business could be a better option for living. The same goes for music choices as younger people preferred newer genres of music while the aged people chose older music patterns more. We assume that socio-demographic factors like play significant role in these attitudinal aspects of the people which correspond with some other studies (Ferry, 2006; LeBlanc, 1996).

We also observed that age was associated with different lifestyle indicators like sleeping and wake up time, the TV channels people watched mostly and so on. Although lifestyle is neither an obvious choice nor easy to implement for many, social participation and life satisfaction vary with age. We noticed that, as people become older they started going to bed early at night and subsequently woke up early in the morning. This behavior was influenced by several factors like poor health condition of the aged, or even religious issues. The younger adults, on the other hand, reported that they would keep up late because they would watch television, spend time in social media or study mostly late at night. The findings not only show how the lifestyle of different generation varies but also rising concern regarding how generation gap is intrigued by technological advancement in modern society (Kubiatko, 2013). A pretty large number of audience is inclined to watching

televisions and similar other media these days and the choice of TV channels and programs, the reasons behind watching them are all contributing to a greater generation gap in our society. These intergenerational differences create articulation in economically disadvantaged classes as Lynn Clark called 'digital generation gap' that raises intensity between the parent and children in families (Clark, 2009; Cho & Hongsik, 2005). In short, the gap between the young and the aged are increasing predominantly in a fast-changing technology-oriented world these days. It is important that we address this issue and create a congenial environment for all social classes irrespective of age, caste, class, ethnic/racial identity. We believe that findings of this study might help policymakers in formulating education, health as well as business policies considering behavior choices and exhibited by people in future.

Conclusion

Attitude and lifestyle are two closely associated aspects of human behavior. This study attempted to seek the variation in these two aspects among three different generations of Bangladesh. We observed that participants from different age groups exhibit a significant difference in terms of their day to day life behavior and attitude. In this study, significant differences among three age groups were observed in terms of political, marital to the specific health-seeking behavior of the people as well as pastime activities, smoking behavior and several other aspects of daily life. Although there are some limitations of this study as we could not incorporate the whole country or rigorous inferential statistics in our analysis, the study is unique in a way that it is one of the very first attempts on this ground specifically in the south-western region of the country. The study is simple in nature and implies some potential implications for further studies. It urges for bridging the gap between the young the aged for better social stability and leaves important implications for further research.

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