

Z Generation in Iran

Mohammad Mohsin Hamidi

Assistant Professor of Politics, Department of Law and Administrative Sciences, Birjand Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran.



ABSTRACT: Like most countries around the world, in recent Iran, has emerged an strong Z Generation. Z Generation, is not merely a cultural concept, it's also a main factor in social and political field of life in Iran. What is the important consequences of an strong emerging Z Generation in Iran on future of political structure and governing in this country?

KEYWORDS: Iran, Z Generation, Social Change, Politics, Unrest.

Problematic

More than three decades is that the term of "Z Generation" has entered into general language of people around the world. What is it's exact concept in social sciences and Humanities? Iran, a country with a religious constitution, has a wide range of people whom we can consider in the category of Z Generation.

What is it's affects in Iran's society? Which socio-political panorama we can assume for this country? In this paper I analyze some socio-cultural and political aspects of this phenomena in recent Iran.

Z Generation

A generation refers to a cohort of people who have a common period of birth. David stillman (2017) believes that naming of generations has been begun with Baby Boomers who were born between 1946 till

1964, which every day the birth rate was increasing from 3 to 4 million. The former generation was named "Silent Generation", as they were passive. (See: Jayatissa,2023,1-2).

About the name of "Z" for this generation, we can say that this term has been applied for who were born in 1990s to 2010. This is seen in many references like ' Encyclopedia

Britannica' and ' Oxford Dictionary'. They can be called as the 'cusper'. A cusper is who has born in the end of a generation and the beginning of another and has a mixed characteristic of both generations,

'Zillennials' is the complete form of this abbreviation and the demographic cohort of this group of people, and also persons who has been born in the cusp of generation Alpha and Z are called 'Zalpha'.

Many aspects of human life in recent years are linked with rapid growing technology. "At the turn of Millennium, technology companies based on the West Coast of the United States created a set of world-changing products that took advantage of the rapidly growing internet. There was a widely shared sense of techno-optimism; these products made life easier, more fun, and more productive. Some of them helped people to connect and communicate, and therefore it seemed likely they would be a boon to the growing number of emerging democracies. Coming soon after the fall of the Iron Curtain, it felt like the dawn of a new age. The founders of these companies were hailed as heroes, geniuses, and global benefactors who, like Prometheus, brought gifts from the gods to humanity. But the tech industry wasn't just transforming life for adults, it began transforming life for children too. Children and adolescents had been watching a lot of television since the 1950, but the new technologies were far more profitable, personalized, and engaging than anything that came before."(Haidt:2024,5-7). So after a long period of technological affects in human life, the time has arrived for some teen-agers and the youth who are thinks and live in different ways.

Z Generation and Social Problems

Rising of technological products and increasing of it's use among Z Generation had some different consequences, good and bad. Some of these products like smart phone or tablet "could keep a child happily engaged and quiet for hours. Was this safe? Nobody knew, but because everyone else was doing it, everyone just assumed that it must be okay. Yet the companies had done little or no research on the mental health effects of their products on children and adolescents, and they shared no data with researchers studying the health effects."(Haidt,2024,8).

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It seems that a major fact in defining and exploration the characteristic of Z Generation is their birth and grow up in a sea of digital products. They had touched these products from the beginning moment of their birth, their arrival to life. The differences will be shown when you consider a generation who started it's first experiences of friendship or meeting with his or her mate in a real world and compare it with a generation that it has started these experiences through social media. "The kids of Generation Z are the first true digital natives, the ones who have never known a world without smartphones and tablets and social media. For many of them, their online exposure begins at birth. Their baby photos are posted on Facebook. They learn to swipe at the same time they learn to speak. Every generation experiences advances in technology, while the broader society debates the consequences. But researchers have found that the shift experienced by today's teens is unprecedented. Every facet of their lives- education, friendship, romance, careers- will be shaped by the technology in their hands. We wanted to understand exactly what it means to grow up in this new era- and wanted to understand it through it through their eyes."(The Washingtonpost:2016,1-2).

Personality and cultural attitudes of a person or a group of people affects on the work, job, it's utility and output. "Most importantly, the Gen Z effect will change the nature of business not only by making technology innovation move faster but by allowing creation and exchange to permeate every corner of the globe. Billions of people who are today outside the economic mainstream will be suddenly thrust into a maelstrom of interconnected commerce, ten billion human beings all entwined in one great, interconnected, global value chain."(Koulopoulos and Keldesens:2014,9).

In the field of business, some researchers mentioned six effects of Z Generation: " Breaking Generations: facing the imminent and immensely disruptive population redistribution that equalizes the number of humans globally in each of the thirteen five-year age groups from birth to sixty-four. Hyper-connecting: moving toward exponential hyper-connectivity among people, computers, machines, and objects. Sling shooting: exploiting disruptive advances in user experience and affordability that turn what was the cutting edge of technology into the norm, allowing large segments of the population to catch up, seemingly overnight, with technology pioneers. Shifting from Affluence to Influence world events through communities that cut across age and other demographic boundaries, without the benefit of access to large pools of capita. Adopting the World as My Classroom: pushing toward global availability and affordability of education through all levels of schooling and for any age. Life-hacking: breaking through barriers, tacking shortcuts, and otherwise outsmarting the system so that we can focus on outcomes rather than processes, making meaning and purpose the center of our personal and professional experience. ."(Koulopoulos and Keldesens:2014,11-14).

Z Generation has it's own expectations and motivations. An study which has been done on Z Generation of Europe in Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Portugal." However, the methods described in the book can be easily applied, without alteration, to the North America region". (Niezurawska, Antoni Kycia and Agnieszka ,2023,2-3).

A major subject in these series of studies about Z Generation is that when this generation attend into organizational or work-places what should be done with them and what they affect on their work field. An study , for-example, has been done about leadership about them or by them. "Transformational leadership is a relatively recent theory of leadership, shown to be effective across various industries. Leaders who cultivate a Transformational Leadership style are able to work together with their followers towards higher goals and shift expectations and perceptions....Generation Z offers their workforce a number of opportunities such as their flexibility, readiness for change and openness to digitalization. On the other hand, Generation Z need more attention and leadership support."(Cowlrick: 20

1995, the year which is now considered as the beginning of the Generation Z, also is the year that Pixar released the first totally computer-generated film. Those who their birth year was that year, then went to the colleges. Some researches was done to know their expectations and motivations.(See: Seemiller & Grace,2016,20).

In any social phenomenon or Trend, we can ask and search for the factors which shaped that, also we can ask this question about Generation Z. A researcher writes: " I asked members of Generation Z (born 1995-2009) to articulate what defined and shaped their generation. The overwhelming response was "technology". It is not only the number of devices and how frequently they interact with digital technologies, but how technologies, but how technology has shaped their thinking, facilitated communication, redefined community, become core to their learning and become almost alike a companion to them, which is extraordinary.(Madden, 2018,1).

There are some other names for generations, other than Z Generation. Gen Y, which also are called The Millennial, have born during 1980-1995, and have experienced revolution of technology and some it's major products like mobile phone and internet." Generation Z:... The children of that generation were often referred to as the 'latchkey kids' because both the parents would be away at work, leaving the children unsupervised and un-parented for a long time (Erickson, 2009). They grew up with minimal parental supervision, compared to previous generations, and thus learned the value of self-reliance...Generation Z's.....Different social, political, economic and cultural factors have significantly influenced each generation, leading them to develop specific differences ... in their values, lifestyle choices, and work values and attitudes (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Work values can influence important variables like employees' job satisfaction and commitment (Gursoy et al., 2008). A work values survey (Lyons et al., 2007) found that Gen X individuals were more open to change than Gen Y, whereas Gen Y scored higher on conservatism. (Gursoy :2008)... studied how different generations respond to authority and the importance of work. Baby Boomers respected the workplace hierarchy and authority and gave greater importance to work than Gen X. Gen Y tends to value autonomy more than

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Gen X and Baby Boomers (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008)...Another difference between Gen X and the Baby Boomers is that the latter values altruism and intellectual stimulation more and the former values security and independence more while Gen Y favours economic return more than the other two generations (See: Mahapatra1, and Bhullar1 and Gupta:2022,1-3).

Marketing is a "This research reviews the emerging literature, providing an overview of the current critical element in economic sector. If this works good, the sector can reach enough benefit and capital. So for a good marketing operation, good knowledge about attitudes and values of consumers is important. Among consumers, Generation Z is a main cohort. A research, for-example about consumer

behavior of Generation Z

"Synthesises the literature into themes, reflected in the developing consumer culture of this unique cohort...

The literature reveals five macro trends impacting brand affinity amongst Gen Z who are global citizens, digital accelerators, future proof, climatarian consumers, and equality activist

These macro trends values are shaping their consumer culture and developing brand relationships."(Keever & O'Rourke & Diffey: 2021, 2).

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Demographic changes in recent Iran could be important to consider the position of Generation Z and its socio-cultural, economic and political consequences. According to Census Center of Iran, some demographic data can be listed here, which I extracted through those year- books. It can be mentioned that the last general census has been done in 1996. Total population in that year was 79926270, which %50/7 of that are men, and %49/3 are women. %51/3 of total men and %48/7 live in rural areas and %50/5 men and %49/5 women of total population live in cities. Literate men were 32912917, and literate women were 29753843. So, %84/2 of women and %91 of men are literates. The data indicates that nearly more than %70 of people is those below 40 years old, who have born after 1995, and according the criteria could be accounted as Z Generation. (See: Iranian Census Center: 2016, 21-29).

While we suppose that Generation Z are those people who born 1995-2015 and in its definition we supposed internet and other technological devices as a major element, we must consider that this time limitation could not be applied precisely to developing countries like Iran, because there is a lag in receiving new technologies in these countries. Internet and mobile phone has appeared in Iran in late 1990, and broad use of social networks in late 2010. But with considering these points, we can speak of Z Generation in Iran, like other countries, rather I think we must prefer at least a time lag limitation , at least five years, and suppose Iranian Z Generation as those people who have born during 2000-2015 and then.

While almost %70 of population of the country are of Z Generation, it indicates that we must consider that more that two-third of people have a Z Generation style of life, their values, attitudes and behaviors are different from other generations. This is while the government and it's official instructions about life style insist on a life style which belongs to 1970s. This difference or contradiction has been accumulated during three decades and has appeared during many huge unrest, specially in 2023 unrest, known as the movement for woman, life, freedom, and has faced the government many consequences and problems, socio-cultural and political problems, and it is continuing currently. I believe that a deep consideration of 2023 unrest will show the socio-cultural roots of this most important political turmoil in Islamic Republic of Iran, during its 46 years of its governance.

According to Systemic Approach in Politics, we can say: A political system which it's values and culture is different from of those are governed by it, has an environment which is contradictory and these two environments and system (internal and external) are confronting in many arenas. For example, in Islamic Republic of Iran, the governing class insisting in Islamic dress of women, Hijab, but the governed, in a large number, don't accept this, at least in this model and styles. This was the main cause of riots in 2023. Also in this approach, furthermore, input and output of system (demands of people and decisions of governing class) is not coordinated.

Now, three branches of state, legislator, executive and judiciary branches have many challenges with Z Generation. They have'not succsseed to introduce solutions for these problems. It seems that if this procedure continues this challenges will attend more into political arena from socio-cultural fields. I think this challenges roots from different ways of thinking between state and Z Generation. This challenges are increasing and will have more political consequences.

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