INTERGENERATIONAL GAP IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

SADHANA GHANYIM [*]

ABSTRACT: *This article presents the gap between parents and children in a technological age, especially in Arab society, which is considered a traditional society, that the father is conducted in authoritarian parenting style, the whole family obeys his instructions; he was the source of information for his sons. Technology has captured Arab society very quickly with the loading of content that the younger ones dominated more than adults and this enabled them to be familiar with the outside world and to build a virtual relationships.The conclusions are that the world of technology stole the children from their parents so that the parents became helpless, something which created a conflict between parents and children. This requires from the parents to change their education system, and even to adapt their parenting style to a technological age.*

KEY WORDS: *Technological gap, parents, communication, social networks, information, digital, attachment.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *Z10.*

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Arab society, like any society which undergoes many cultural and technological changes, is influenced by globalization processes and Western modernization in all fields - social, economic, cultural and technological (Hajj, 2006).

I remember when I was a child when there was no technological means, how we grew up in a traditional family with clear and rigid boundaries. I was forbidden to go with a child even from my class in the street. It is forbidden for an adolescent to love and talk to a stranger. It is forbidden to leave the house in the late hours. If such a thing happened, my parents would punish us.

---

[*] *MA in Educational counselling, Technology high school, sadhana14101979@gmail.com*

On the other hand, we had real friends who would visit each other and talk face to face about everything we wanted, we would sit in the family with my grandparents and tell us the stories of the past. Mother would always sit and warn us from stations in life that we pass them and give us the tools to cope with our difficulties that we can encounter in the continuation of our ways.

Today I look at the way how I grow my children; I try not to be as authoritative as my parents grew us. This transition in our family from a traditional family to a modern family obliges us as parents to switch from an authoritarian parental approach to a democratic parental approach. So I let them go out but make sure they will be at home early, go out with their friends and girlfriends, but I have to know who their group is, on one hand let and on the other hand I set boundaries, but when I talk about technology I feel helpless in limiting their hours of engaging with technology. They sit for many hours in front of the computer and in front of the smart phone and think how much these measures steal them from our love and our lap? With whom do they talk to for hours on What's Up and Facebook? What games do they play? And what content do they watch?

Such questions concern us as parents after the digital and technological world has occupied us especially in a traditional society in which so many values and boundaries were clear within the family. The father is the authoritative figure that all the children obey to his request in addition to the mother, both of whom were the only source of information for the children.

2. The Influence of Technology on the Family Relationship

Social networks are an open and free environment for users worldwide to communicate and to share information, such as Twitter, You-tube, Delicious, Facebook and more. The social networks were created as part of the development of the Internet and especially its 2.0 generation; the networks enable groups of people who choose to belong to the community (by creating a personal profile) and to maintain contacts, sharing and exchanging information via the Internet on various subjects (Brogan, 2011).

Technically, a network is actually enables users to build a public or semi-public profile as well as structured in interpersonal relationships (Burke & Kraut, 2014) and they are very popular among youth (Cornejo et.al. , 2013). Educational uses of social networks are also common (Burke & Kraut, 2014), and the network also promotes information sharing and discovery, collaborative learning, promoting social and personal purposes, creating social relationships, and more.

Brogan (2011) argues that the social network actually provides three dimensions of uses: information, friendship dimension and attachment dimension. The information dimension included uses such as sharing personal information, sharing activities, collecting information, learning about various events, publishing pictures, searching for pictures, and more. Through this dimension users published and shared different information, which was available to a large audience at the same time. The dimension of membership contained uses such as maintaining contact with old friends, maintaining contact with existing friends, and searching for old friends. Through this

dimension, users of social networking sites quickly and easily maintained friendships with their present and veteran familiar people. The attachment dimension contained uses such as: searching for dates, creating new friendships, and the like.

Social networks on the Internet are key-domain which is ever-growing in terms of: the number and social networks and their characteristics, the possibilities that they offer to users, including the ability to use them in a variety of means, including mobile phones (Wang et.al., 2015). There are many social networks, and the applications that they offer are slightly different from each other and have been created or targeted to specific groups. Some of them were established on grounds such as common interests, promotion of professional ties, contact between participants from a similar background or ethnic, religious, gender, age or political group, and some became networks that have similar socioeconomic characteristics without the founders' intentions.

In terms of popularity, social networks are among the most popular applications on the Internet. For example, the largest social network, Facebook, has about 677 million users and about 3.34 million users in Israel. About 63% of Internet users in Israel use Facebook (Cornej et.al., 2013). According to Google estimates, the number of "unique visitors" of Facebook per day is more than 300 million, and the number of unique visitors per month is about 780 million according to 2012 data (Cornej et.al., 2013). The number of "unique visitors" per day from Israel on Facebook is over 1.4 million, and the number of unique visitors per month is 3.5 million[1]. Of course, a very large number of users are youth and young people. Thus, for example, greater reliance on social relationships with the peer group as a means of developing personal identity is one of the significant developmental characteristics of adolescence. Therefore, social networks on the Internet use the availability, accessibility, flexibility and wide supply that characterize the Internet, and in recent years have become a dominant space of discourse among youth. Social networks today serve as a central tool for entertainment and communication, which is designed by the image of the society that uses it, and on the other hand, has a great influence on its image (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009).

3. Social Networks and Family Relationships

In terms of their importance, social media in general, with networks such as Facebook or the Instagram in particular, play a significant role today in influencing people's behavior and social, economic or business conduct. Facebook is by its nature a tool that encourages exposure and it can be said that people are easier to expose themselves behind a screen because they are actually entering to a virtual and world which is more "protected" than in the real world and during real encounters. However, within this virtual world, almost without paying attention for it, people make this social Internet tool more powerful because of the time they invest in it and a large part of their private and internal worlds are exposed to their friends and found in digital pages (Camp & Miles, 2012).

---

[1] Data from "Google" Website through Google AdPlanner, Date of Entry: May 2, 2011.

In these contexts, people gradually change their perception of privacy and put more and more elements of their personal and social lives into the net. It is written that today we have a higher level of exposure to the public than in the past, and we can see our updates, what we did and where we were, everyone can see the photos of the users or wander through albums from their last vacation (Mish & Alagli, 2008).

Psychology researchers who study the behavior argue that social media are currently influencing many fields of our lives, including the field of marital relationships and family relationships (Clayton et.al., 2012).

For example, Burke and Kraut's (2014) study examined whether people who use Facebook are closer to their friends through social networking sites such as Facebook, or they simply reflect existing relationships. The study included a combination of text analysis and cross-sectional surveys of 3,649 Facebook users who reported about contacts with 26,134 members. It has been found that the Facebook attachment has been associated with changes in the reported relationship with friends, and this is above and beyond the effects that can be attributed face to face, phones or emails. The findings show that the strength of the social network has grown considerably not only in the immediate circle but also outside it. One-to-one communication that includes posts, comments, and messages, as well as reading content that is sent by friends, such as status updates and photos, shows an even greater effect of network memberships. The researchers conclude that Facebook has a greater influence on relationships and connection outside the family that are not often communicated through other channels. This of course has an influence on relationships within the home.

The effects of the use of social media (and sometimes of abuse) on marriage and existing relationships are now more examined in light of the changing habits of this media consumption by men and women, which sometimes indicate excessive use of both genders, which many times leads to conflicts on the background of the fact that the networks serve as a springboard for dating (Cornejo et.al., 2013).

Social media actually changed the way we meet and communicate one with another. It provides a platform to learn more about the people with whom you familiar, those who you were familiar with, and people with whom you do not familiar and want to associate with a particular species of type. However, this may be a problem, however, when it comes to romantic relationships, because studies show that increased use of social media may lead to marital problems, infidelity, divorce (Clayton et.al., 2013).

In a study of Clayton et al., they compared divorce rates by country and by Facebook account data per capita. The study found a relation between the use of social media and a decline in the quality of marriage in each model examined and in light of each presented data. In addition, an average annual increase of 20% was found in Facebook registration, which was associated with an increase of 2.18% to 4.32% in divorce rates. The research model created by the personal survey shows that people who do not use social media are 11% happier in their marriage than people who regularly use social media (Clayton et.al., 2013).

A study-survey of Valenzuela & Co three years ago (Valenzuela et.al., 2014) on Facebook also revealed the complex relation between the use of social networking

sites (SNS), marital satisfaction rates, and divorce rates, through using real "survey data" of married people and state data from the United States. The results showed that the use of SNS negatively correlated with the quality of marriage and happiness, and positive correlation was shown with regard to problematic relationship experience or frequent divorce thoughts. These correlations existed in a variety of economic, demographic, and psychological variables related to marital well-being. Moreover, the findings of a personal analysis were consistent with analysis at the level of the US states that as higher the rate of Facebook distribution between 2008 and 2010, the so positive correlations of divorce rates increased during the same period, due to control and supervision of other variables of influences outside.

We know that Arab society is a collective society so that the central values within Arab society are to maintain harmony, respect and commitment to the family, mutual support, modesty and satisfaction of other needs (Amer , 2012). Engaging in different forms of social media is a routine activity that the studies have shown that they provide to children and adolescents through improved communication, social relationships, and even technical skills. Social media sites such as Facebook and My Space offer many daily opportunities to connect with friends, classmates, and people of common interests. Over the last 5 years, the number of preadolescents and adolescents through such sites has increased dramatically. According to a recent survey, 22% of teens enter their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day, and more than half of adolescents enter the social media site more than once a day. Seventy-five percent of adolescents hold cell phones, 25% use them for social media, 54% use text, and 24% use instant messaging. Thus, much of the social and emotional development of this generation takes place through the Internet and the cell phones.

Because of their limited ability to self-regulation and sensitivity to social pressure, children and adolescents are at particular risk when they navigate and experiment social media. Recent studies indicate that there are frequent online expressions of offline behaviors such as bullying, wording of clicks, and sexual experimentation that present problems such as cyberbullying and other problems including containing messages, Internet addiction and sleep deprivation simultaneously.

After the father was the dominant figure at home, the whole family obeys his requests. Today we hear the children say that our parents do not understand us. They are extreme and primitive. They complain that no one hears them, does not understand them and does not dedicate enough space to them. The parents also accuse their children of superficial fields and reject their opinions. Complain that the children do not follow their instructions, do not respect customs and traditions, and have no experience in life.

This conflict is natural in a multi-generational family with all the intellectual, cultural and technological changes and developments. The worldview of the new generation changes in relation to thoughts and priorities and quality of life. All the barriers have fallen, it has become more complicated.

For decades, the family, the school and the mosque played a key role in the design of human perceptions and cultures, and contributed to the creation of a value

system that sustains and takes into account the parameters of social behavior, including parent-child relations.

The role of the parents is to grow and educate the children, and to prepare them for their role in adult life as authentic, autonomous, independent and responsible people.

Today, we see that the role of parents is weakened by the advent of the digital world that created a risk of parental leadership, so that parents no longer manage to grow children according to their purpose. A large part of the parents' role has moved to the digital mobile and electronic world which opens patterns of virtual communication that replaced dialogue and conversation among the members of the same family and thus widened the gap and perpetuated the conflict between parents and children.

In this age, parenthood has become a profession that requires many special skills that need to be learned. The technology attacked Arab society so quickly and the parents had no awareness of the information which is found in all the technological means, and were not prepared to receive the information and did not understand what information the child accepts from these means (Agranovski, et.al., 2012).

These technological transformations have led to new family interactions that have strengthened isolation and dissonance among their members.

The older generation's ability to cope with computers, the Internet and the modern media is far less than of their children from the modern generations, which makes them unable to follow their children's affairs by these means. They feel that the intergenerational gap is growing and there is a cultural and social difference between them and their children. While the children exchanged their parents on the Internet as a source of information, they lost family cohesion and engaged in dialogue with outsiders in the vast space.

Another reason for the parents' distress in the modern era is the decline in their children's dependence on them as a source of knowledge in a society of open mass media. Neil Postman claims in his book "The Loss of Childhood" (1986) that during our time children are not longer children. He argues that in the past the existence of childhood depended on the principles of structured information and gradual study. The new communications environment provides everyone with the same information at the same time, without the possibility of keeping secrets. Under such circumstances, in his opinion, nothing like a childhood could exist. He writes: "The metaphor we use most often is that television is a window to the world, but this is absolutely accurate, but I wonder why it should be seen as a sign of progress. What does it mean that our children are equipped with more information than ever before and that they know what the adults know? It means that they became adult, or at least like adults. This means (If I use a metaphor of my own) that when they have access to the information fruit of adults which were previously hidden from them, they are expelled from the paradise of childhood" (Ibid, pp. 85-86). As a result, a parent in our time feels less significant as a source of knowledge for the young adolescent who lives at home.

With the strengthening of the status of the child, the child becomes a source of knowledge for parents, so parents ask the child to support and help them through the use of the computer. In addition, the child becomes a partner of the parents in making decisions in the family. For example, a parent who asks the child to find a vacation via

the Internet on a computer is sharing the same type of vacation and budget... In this way, the parents increase the children's influence.

This reality obligates parents to make changes in their relationships with their children and instead of focusing on the norms and values on which they grew up in their childhood, should focus on the accepted norms of their children's world. As the Caliph and Imam Ali bin Abi Talib said: "Educate your children and prepare them for customs and norms that are different from yours, because they will live at a different time of your time".

Dr. Adel Sadek (professor of psychiatry and neurology) said: "As a psychiatrist, I expect that there are very serious psychological illnesses that will be revealed to the next generation as a result of the psychological isolation in which it will live. We lived with kindness and with family kindness. Our father and mother would kiss and hug us and we would sit and eat with them, and today all this is only in dreams".

We see the adolescents sit for hours in front of the computer screen and communicate with friends on the net, chatting with people that they do not familiar with them, building virtual love relationships and building an entire virtual world that keeps them away from the family. All this undermines the role of the parents and widens the generational gap.

Based on Thyer (1989) a behavioral practice plan to the parent has to be structured to empirically guide the parents how to implement the children's management through strategies based on analytic behavioral principals. In theory, these skills are simple and have to be easy to implement. Usually, practicing a parent involves teaching the parents to identify their child's behavior and how to react to it. Specifically, the parents have to learn how to reinforce, punish, correct mistakes etc.

There are two types of behavioral parents' practice in the literature: plans that teach the general parenting skills and plans of teaching parents how to improve specific behavioral problems of their child.

3. What We as Parents Can Do in Order to Reduce the Gap between Us and the Children in the Technological Age?

Based on the above, the recommendations are that we as parents are aware of the severity of the technological means on the lives and future of our children "if they children or adolescents" in widening the gap between parents and children so that it reduces communication between parents and children within the family after these relationships were based on warmth and love and replace them by conflicts. However, there is no solution in this to distance our children from technological means, but we can take steps to reduce this gap:

1. To switch from an **authoritarian parenting style** that characterizes traditional Arab society and especially the older age that they believe in the power of authority. The parents are the sole decision makers and they expect that their instructions will be fulfilled without explanation and if the child does not hear their request he/she is punished. To **an authoritative parenting style** which is

characterized by a democratic education method which is based on principles of sharing, consultation and division of duties in carrying out daily tasks of life, encouraging children to accept personal responsibility and independence according to the age and capacity of the child, the authoritative style is based on a great deal of acceptance, alongside with close control. Thus, for example, using technology should set clear standards for children's behavior, how technology will be used, time to instruct the child, but to monitor the content they use, to set times for Internet. The discipline they adopt is supportive rather than punitive. This style encourages autonomy (Baumrind, 1991; Bar-Ab, 2001).

2. Open dialogue between parents and children about rational use of media, problems they have encountered or even which they may cope with them in the future.

Dialogue and building positive relationships between parents and children should be from childhood, which will reflect positively on their attitudes and behavior in their interactions with others in the community, as well as building positive relationships between parents and children in which the efficient dialogue between them leads to mutual respect and improves the children's confidence, and encourages them to be heard with thinking, expression and transparency and dialogue that reveals problems and assists in the search for early solutions, by removing obstacles and developing friendship between the two sides, which can only be through dialogue. To show to the children the experiences of others who are hurt by these technological devices, and preach them so as not to fall into bitter experiences.

The relationships between parents and children should be based on trust between parents and children, continuous dialogue and communication, and as long as there is dialogue and communication there is trust and therefore there is continuous communication and openness from the children to their parents. During the conversation, the parents should be connected to the child and understand his/her world and what he/she is going through. This kind of treatment enables children to expose parents to everything they go through the network, and to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with their parents. Therefore, the parents can explain to children the advantages of the media because there is no doubt that all media are positive. Technology has enabled us to be open to the outside world and be aware of what is happening around us. We can discuss this issue with our children, explain to them, there is room to discuss what is good and what is not, so that children can take advantage of the benefits and avoid negatives in this way.

3. Due to the presence of the technological gap between parents and children, the role of the parents is to bridge the gap with the children through their intervention in what their children do online.

Parents tend to trust on children, even though children encounter problems randomly and unplanned. They need to keep abreast of what is happening on the web, technological developments, existing influences, and child protection options and also to be familiar with the children's world of content.

Routine conversations should be developed with the child about computer use and surfing, in order to develop an overall awareness, prevent future problems, and to

be updated with the contents of the child. It is possible that these conversations will raise difficulties with which the child copes, so that these difficulties can be handed as soon as it possible.

Conclusions

The technological world in Arab society has spread very rapidly with a flood of content that parents were not prepared to cope with. This forced them to move from a traditional family to a modern family, which weakened and undermined the parent's status. His/her role as a source of knowledge shifted to the technological world, something that created a technological gap between parents and their children.

Today, parents in an Arab society have to think about how to narrow the gap by changing the perception of parenting style from an authoritarian parent to a more authoritative parent with an open dialogue and learning for himself/herself the world of technology. On the other hand, to be open-eyed to what is happening with his/her child, and to follow the content that the children use in order to direct and to guide.

REFERENCES:

[1]. **Al-Awidi, A.** (2012) *The Means of Technology and its Impact on the Family, Albion Magazine*, Chapter 13

[2]. **Amit, H.** (2012); *The plight of parenting in the modern era*

[3]. **Bennett, A.** (2006) *Reincarnation, sect unity, and identity among the Druze*. Ethnology, 45(2), 87

[4]. **David, B.** (1991) *Parenting and attitudes towards violence in the intergenerational view of religiosity and secularism*. From Judea, Judea and Samaria College. Research Institute

[5]. **Brogan, K.** (2011) *Social media - everything you wanted to know*. Amatzia Publishing

[6]. **Burke, M.; Kraut, R.E.** (2014) *Growing closer on facebook: changes in tie strength through social network site use*, in Proceedings of the 32nd annual ACM conference on Human factors in computing systems, pp. 4187-4196, ACM

[7]. **Camp, S.M.; Mills, D.C.** (2012) *The marriage of plastic surgery and social media: a relationship to last a lifetime*

[8]. **Clayton, R.B.; Nagurney, A.; Smith, J.R.** (2013) *Cheating, breakup, and divorce: Is Facebook use to blame?*

[9]. **Cornejo, R.; Tentori, M.; Favela, J.** (2013) *Enriching in-person encounters through social media: A study on family connectedness for the elderly.* International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, *71*(9), 889-899

[10]. **Gilbert, E.; Karahalios, K.** (2009) *Predicting tie strength with social media*, in Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems, pp. 211-220, ACM

[11]. **Mesh, G.; Tzvia Algali, T.** (2008) *Social networks between social capital from Gesher and social capital Makashar*, Haifa University, and Bar-Ilan University

[12]. **Hand, M.M.; Thomas, D.; Buboltz, W.C.; Deemer, E.D.; Buyanjargal, M.** (2013) *Facebook and romantic relationships: Intimacy and couple satisfaction associated with online social network use*. Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Network, *16*(1), 8-13.

[13]. **Jeraisy, P.** (2012) *Psychosocial Therapy in Arab Society*, Chapter 23

[14]. **Jordan, N.A.; Russell, L.; Afousi, E.; Chemel, T.; McVicker, M.; Robertson, J.; Winek, J.** (2014) *The ethical use of social media in marriage and family therapy: Recommendations and future directions*. The Family Journal, *22*(1), 105-112

[15]. Kamal, S.; Arefin, M.S. (2016) *Impact analysis of facebook in family bonding*. Social Network Analysis and Mining, 6(1), 1-14

[16]. Khaj Yahya, N. (2006) *Relationship and Parenting in the Arab Family in Israel: Processes of Change*

[17]. Khatib, A. (2009) *Data on the Druze population in Israel*, the Knesset, the Research and Information Center, Jerusalem

[18]. Li, W.; O'Brien, J.E.; Snyder, S.M.; Howard, M.O. (2015) *Characteristics of internet addiction/pathological internet use in US University students: A qualitative-method investigation*, PloS one, 10(2), e0117372

[19]. Lwin, M.O. (2016) *Fourteenth Family Research Network (FRN) Forum The Impact of the Internet and Social Media on Social and Familial Ties*

[20]. Rosner, A. (2011) *Druze Women in Higher Education, People-Israel Guide to Israeli Society* - Samuel Neaman Institute for National Policy Research

[21]. Thyer, B.A. (Ed.) (1989) *Behavioral family therapy*. CC Thomas Chicago

[22]. Valenzuela, S.; Halpern, D.; Katz, J.E. (2014) *Social network sites, marriage well-being and divorce: Survey and state-level evidence from the United States*. Computers in Human Behavior, 36, 94-101

[23]. Weiner-Levy, N. (2006) *The flagbearers: Israeli Druze women challenge traditional gender roles*.Anthropology and Education Quarterly 37(3), 217–235

[24]. Weiner-Levy, N. (2008) *On cross cultural bridges and gaps: Identity transitions among trailblazing Druze women.* Gender and Education 20(2), 29–44

[25]. http://www.netivei-reshet.org/he/node/22 [Accessed at 1 december 2016]