Does New Media Help to Bridge or Divide the Conflict in Generation Gap: A study on the youth of Sikkim

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ABSTRACT

Generation Gap is not the word of the Year; it is an old term used widely, over the past few years, different regions have shown different graphs highlighting the problem associated with generation gap and media is often accused of creating or magnifying the gap. Generation gap is defined as difference of attitudes and understanding between two generations, imbibes an actual deep rooted problem. Difference of attitudes and understanding often leads to erosion of culture and traditions, which is directly related to the existence and identity of the individual. Culture, though a complex topic can be simply defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society passed on from one generation to another. Generation gap often disrupts the transmission and creates a gap to bring monoculture, which means a culture is dominated by a single shared belief, objective, or other element that defines the group and others does not exist in a long run. The research tries to understand the existence of any such gap in the society of Sikkim and whether media is actually the responsible factor for the gap or not. The research also tries to find out whether the causes can be utilised as a cure or not.

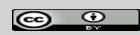**Keywords:** New media, generation gap

Most of the countries in the world are exposed to altered forms of conflict both internally and externally, Misbalanced Population is among one. Misbalanced population can be defined as such set of current population where equivalent portion of replacement among the generation is been mismatched, today it is often popularised in terms such as ageing population[1] in contemporary society. The misbalanced population is often a direct result of the population policy failure of the region or country (https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/WCMS_175936/lang--en/index.htm).

While many sub sets of categorical problems such as Work Labour force, Social security, unemployment and so on, co-exist within misbalanced population, generation gap and the Conflicts arising due to it is often overlooked. Generation gap (https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-population-up-un-sowp-report-life-expectancy-fertility-rate-8564123/) commonly and loosely is defined as difference of attitudes and understanding between two generations, imbibes an actual deep rooted problem. Difference of attitudes and understanding often leads to erosion of culture and traditions,

which is directly related to the existence and identity of the individual. Culture, though a complex topic can be simply defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society passed on from one generation to another.

On the flip side, media is frequently held as one of the direct and prime responsible factor in creating or magnifying the gap. Media affects theories such as Magic Bullet Theory or Hypodermic Needle/Syringe Theory (https://www.sikkimexpress.com/news-details/depleting-culture-and-tradition-a-concern), and Cultivation Analysis (https://timesofindia. indiatimes.com/readersblog/kirtika-chaudhary/a-generation-gap-30562/) and research article based on these theories has proven time and again the powerful influence of media on its consumers. The powerful influence can be best described in the quote of Malcolm X, "Media is the most powerful entity in the world, and it has the power to make innocent-guilty and the guilty- innocent". Adding to it, the mounting statistics projects how media, to be particular New Media has become an integral part of the human life.

As per World Population Review, India ranks second position in Internet usage among all the countries, along with that as per The Indian Association of Mobile and Internet Association (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dicti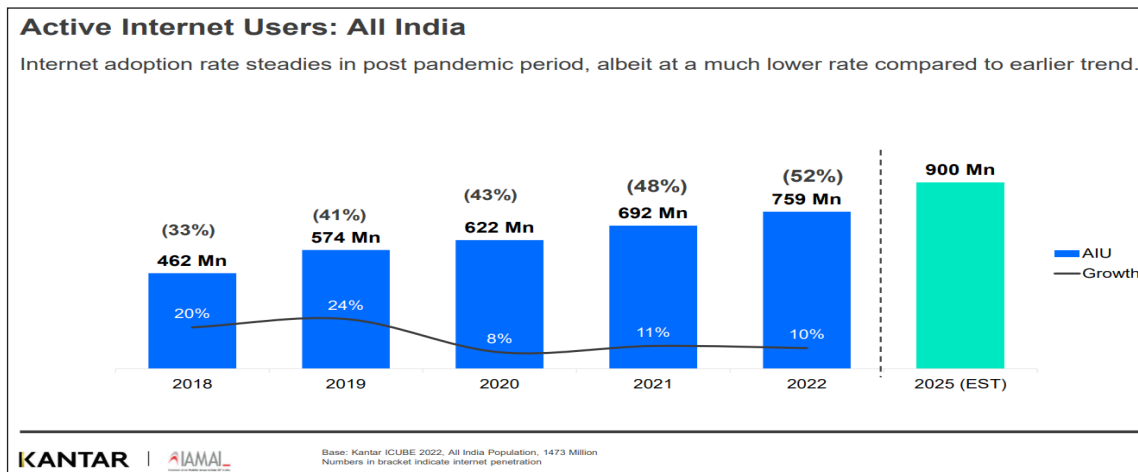onary/generation%20gap), 759 million active internet users are present in India (Graph 1), with an average usage of two hours per day.

Activities of the active internet users in India range from entertainment, communication, Social Media, Net Commerce and Online Shopping (Graph 2).
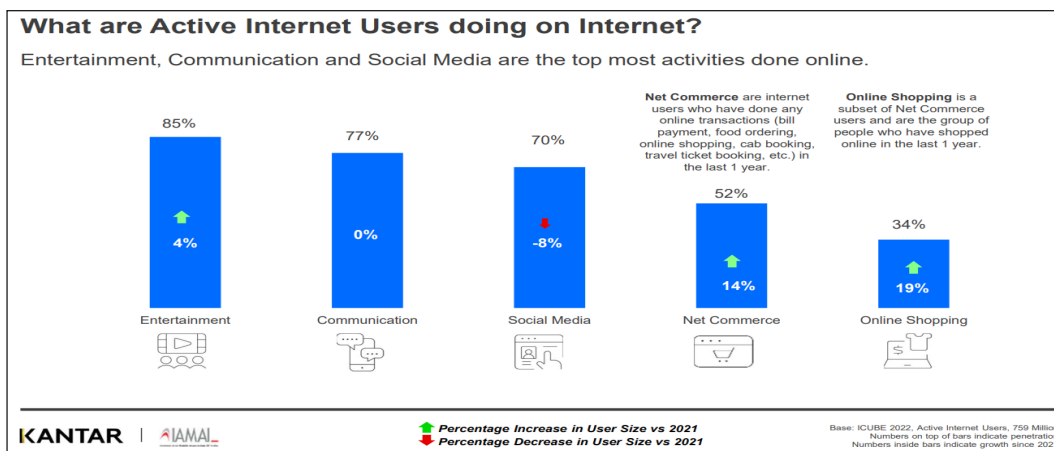
The rise of Monoculture

Monoculture, a common terminology used in agriculture, is also used in Sociology to define a singular form of culture, agreed and practiced by all. However, the complexities lied in the simplicity of the definition. With the rise of internet user, the monoculture is back, and does not come in a good shape. As diverse forms of culture and tradition co-exist in the society, the monoculture is actually a disguise where audience is absorbing foreign culture as their own culture and in way forgetting their own culture and is been called monoculture. In the practice of Monoculture, the dominant side wins and the minority lose. It means the culture is led or dominated by a single shared belief, objective, or other element that defines the group. With such practice the gap between the generations widens.

This article tries to recapitulate the chain reaction of generation gap and its conflicts and whether the media, who are often held responsible could be utilised to fill up the gap. This article in short tries to find out whether a virus can be an antidote too.

Active Internet Users: All India

Internet adoption rate steadies in post pandemic period, albeit at a much lower rate compared to earlier trend.

(33%) 462 Mn — 2018 — 20%
(41%) 574 Mn — 2019 — 24%
(43%) 622 Mn — 2020 — 8%
(48%) 692 Mn — 2021 — 11%
(52%) 759 Mn — 2022 — 10%
900 Mn — 2025 (EST)

AIU
Growth

KANTAR | IAMAI
Base: Kantar ICUBE 2022, All India Population, 1473 Million
Numbers in bracket indicate internet penetration

Graph 1

What are Active Internet Users doing on Internet?

Entertainment, Communication and Social Media are the top most activities done online.

Net Commerce are internet users who have done any online transactions (bill payment, food ordering, online shopping, cab booking, travel ticket booking, etc.) in the last 1 year.

Online Shopping is a subset of Net Commerce users and are the group of people who have shopped online in the last 1 year.

85% — Entertainment — ⬆ 4%

77% — Communication — 0%

70% — Social Media — ⬇ -8%

52% — Net Commerce — ⬆ 14%

34% — Online Shopping — ⬆ 19%

KANTAR | IAMAI

⬆ Percentage Increase in User Size vs 2021
⬇ Percentage Decrease in User Size vs 2021

Base: ICUBE 2022, Active Internet Users, 759 Million
Numbers on top of bars indicate penetration
Numbers inside bars indicate growth since 2021

Graph 2

Research Methodology

Both the primary and secondary data were part of the research methodology. Primary data were collected through a Survey questionnaire, followed by a Focus Group Discussion conducted in four district i.e. North district, South district, East district and West district of the 22nd state of India, i.e. Sikkim. In each group a semi-structured Questionnaire was used primarily to conduct/incept the FGD. The Focus Group Discussion was transcript to get the analysis and result part.

Each group comprises of 15 participants mostly within the gap group of 18-25 years old and college students. Apart participatory method was also used to understand the side of the senior citizen to give equal justice to both side of the generation.

Article and publication involving the topic both in for and against were consulted and considered. Reports from government website, News organizations and Media house, research foundation, authenticate polling agents were also part of the secondary data.

Research Area

When it comes to population, India tops the chart as per the recent report by the UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2023. India is a diverse country in many aspects, be it historically, geographically, socially, and economically and so on. With toping the chart in population category, the country does face the misbalanced population problems and with many diverse regions has diverse genus of population problems. Among the 28 states of India, Sikkim, the 22nd state of India is the least populated state on India with a density of 86 per sq. km. was choosen as the Research Area.

Research Population: Youth of Sikkim

As per Observer Research Foundation, Youths are vital for the progress and success of a nation. Most of the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on the youth, identifying them as a critical national demographic and highlighting the need for investing in them. According to same report, 68 per cent of India's total population is between the ages of 15 and 64 years, which is considered the working population of a country. About 25 per cent is between 0-14 years; 18 per cent between 10 and 19 years, 26 per cent between 10 and 24 years, and 7 per cent above 65 years. India stands as the world largest youth population with its current demographics. Sikkim shows similar trend of demographic profile and 40 per cent of the population comes in the category of youth population.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Demographic details: Out of total 60 participants, 36 were male and 24 were female. All the participants were the citizen of the State and pursuing graduation. Coming to Social Status 9 were from General Category, 10 from Scheduled Tribe, 20

Other Background Class, 7 Scheduled Caste, 14 from Most Backward Category. Religion wise 68 per cent followed Hinduism, 30 per cent followed Buddhism, and only 2 per cent follow Christianity. 86 per cent belong to Above Poverty Line and 14 per cent Below Poverty Line. Marital Status of all the participants was single. Entire participants could speak, write and understand three languages i.e. Hindi, English and Nepali (Lingual facia of Sikkim) and 4 per cent master their ethnic language. Coming to family structure 73 per cent belong to a joint family structure having grandparents with them and 22 belonged to nuclear family structure.

Media and New Media Data: All the participants had access to traditional Media. Entire participants had television set at home with Direct To Home connectivity, News were consumed daily via news portal. Voice of Sikkim was one of the preferred news portals among the youths. Newspapers were consumed by all the participants but not on subscription basis but day to day purchase basis. Radio was accessed by the participants via mobile phone. Entire participants had smart mobile phone with internet connectivity and on an average they spend 120 minutes to 180 minutes on internet on a daily basis.

The entire participant was aware of the social media handle and had social media accounts. Entire participants had a Facebook accounts, only 17 per cent participants had Instagram account. The first choice of internet usage was entertainment purpose including social media, followed by Online Shopping and knowledge (educational and awareness) purpose and others.

Data on generation gap

(a) Is there any generation Gap between you and your parents or grandparents

Discussion: 86 per cent said Yes and 14 per cent said No to the existence of Generation Gap. The gap was mostly in the area of day to day life decisions. Such as; a.i.) A work is said to do in a particular way by the older generation but younger generation prefers to do it in their own ways , sometimes leading to conflicts.

a.b) Senior complains of engaging more on mobile phone while in home and young generation absorbing such comments as nothing important being said.

a.c) Not finding a common topic of discussion or talk in home on a daily basis with elders.

(b) What are the possible reasons of such generation gap?

Discussion: Fast Changing society, modernization, fast technology, Cut throat competition, financial dependency, complexities in human, trust issues, easy access to everything leading to reduction in patience, short cut for everything were few common reasons.

(c) Do you think access usage of mobile phone might be one the prime reasons

Discussion: Surprising only 32 per cent said Yes and 68 per cent said No to his question. Mobile phone access was associated with words such as being updated, awareness, and entertainment and not associated with reasons for generation gap by majority. Generation gap is believed to exist due to the lesser time spending between two generations due to high competition and life style changes.

(d) How can the generation gap be reduced?

Discussion: More time allocation from both generations, having an open mind set to understand each other, paying respect to each other ideologies were common words used in the discussion.

(e) How can one use media to bridge the generation gap?

Discussion: 92 per cent participants believed that the media is a useful tool if used in an effective way. Media can be actually utilised to bridge the gap. Media helps in finding common topic of discussion and area of interest such as comedy, knowledge, news, information and entertainment valued content, helps in gluing the family in different occasions. It was agreed that the younger generation need to be more patient with the senior generation and senior generation need to be more acceptable with the younger generation.

During the Focus Group Discussion few observation were made:

1. The response of the participants were authentic

2. As 80 per cent communication is said to be the body language. Participant's body language, facial expression and active participation displayed honestly.

3. Active participation was witnessed during the discussion.

4. Due to the familiarity with the investigator, participants were more open to expression.

REPORT AND CONCLUSION

Generation Gap is not the word of the Year; it is an old term used widely, over the past few years, different regions have shown different graphs highlighting the problem associated with generation gap and media is often accused for the gap. In the research area, through the research done via focus group discussion, it is been found that generation gap exists in the society but there frequency level varies. The gap is widen most of time in day to day affairs and the gap is low during special days and occasion, special days which are associated to any family get –together, such as anniversaries, picnic, days associated with tradition and culture, the gap is less. Again in a life span, day to days affairs counts more compare to special days, hence the number of occurrence of conflicts in generation gap is comparatively more. Coming to the gravity of the conflicts, though the occurrence level is high yet the magnitude of the conflict is found to be low, because on special and important days the occurrence level is less. Special and important days form majority of the human memories, exchange of ideas and serious talks, where occurrence of conflicts due to generation gap is seen to be low leading to low gravity of the conflict. Also other reasons, of the low gravity of generation gap in the society is, Sikkim being one of the strong preserver and practioner of tradition and culture. Promoting culture and tradition is one of important manifesto of every existing political party and which remains uncontested; the government tries every possible measure to uphold the culture and tradition, not only in preserving but also practising mode. Along

with the society still maintain a strong family structure which leads to the low occurrence of conflicts in generation gap.

One important finding was the Sikkim society mainly comprises of three ethnic groups, the Lepcha, the Bhutias and the Nepali. Population wise Nepali makes the majority of the population making Bhutias and Lepcha a minority. Conflicts occurrence was seen less in the minority group compare to the majority group.

Generation Gap and its conflicts exist but the gravity of the existence is very less in the society of Sikkim. As seen in other cases, media usage does not lead to the generation gap. The State can be an example to those regions where conflicts due to generation gap is severe.

END NOTES

World Health Organization defines Ageing population as "The ageing of the world's populations is the result of the continued decline in fertility rates and increased life expectancy. This demographic change has resulted in increasing numbers and proportions of people who are over 60".

As per Statistica.com, In 2023, Monaco was the country with the highest percentage of total population that was over the age of 65 with 36 per cent. Japan had the second highest with 29 per cent, while Portugal and Bulgaria followed in third with 24 per cent. Recently China, Russia and North Korea where in News Headlines for their calls for women to have more children.

Investopedia defines Generation Gap as "A generation gap refers to the chasm that separates the beliefs and behaviors belonging to members of two different generations. More specifically, a generation gap can be used to describe the differences in thoughts, actions, and tastes exhibited by members of younger generations versus older ones".

Communicationtheory.org defines Hypodermic Needle theory as "The media (magic gun) fired the message directly into audience head without their own knowledge. The message cause the instant reaction from the audience mind without any hesitation is called "Magic Bullet Theory". The media (needle) injects the message into audience mind and it cause changes in audience behavior and psyche towards the message. Audience are passive and they can't resist the media message is called "Hypodermic Needle Theory".

Communicationtheory.org defines "The cultivation theory was proposed by George Gerbner. It is one of the core

theories of media effects. According to the theory, people who watch television frequently are more likely to be influenced by the messages from the world of television. The influence goes to such an extent that their world view and perceptions start reflecting what they repeatedly see and hear on television. Television is, therefore, considered to contribute independently to the way people perceive social reality".

Established in 2004, the Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) a not-for-profit industry body and the country's only organisation representing the digital services industry with over 400 Indian and multinational corporations as its member

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