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Political Activism in Generation Y: A Global Phenomenon

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Abstract

Generation Y, born between 1978 and 2000, is now ready to affect their general surroundings. And that not only involves social rather other aspects such as business and in particular politics. The recent research on generation Y shows an increasing emphasis on a unique behavioral manifestation of political activism in generation Y which is not limited to a specific ethnic, social or cultural class rather has been observed all over the world. This research, therefore, establishes the proposition that political activism among generation Y is a global phenomenon. Taking the critical realist ontological stance, this research substantiate the recent empirical evidences from Malaysia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Turkey, USA, Quebec, UK, and Chile to analyze its proposition. The research concludes that its proposition is valid; therefore, further research using different scientific methods must be conducted for further breadth and rigor of this area of knowledge.

Keywords: Generation Y, Political Activism, Globalization

Introduction

Generation Y, having age accomplice somewhere around 18 and 29 at the start of the new millennium, is now ready to affect their general surroundings (Morin and Taylor, 2014). In a few ways they have been observed to be scattered in their perspectives, however in others they are reliably conflicting (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002; Macky, Gardner and Forsyth, 2008). According to the research (Morin and Taylor, 2014) the behavior of Generation Y is much more sensitive to the religious, political and social exercises ranging from voting to joining a political association. There increasing participation in different fields of life can and will have a noteworthy effect upon society, business and politics. This effect is not limited to the behavior of male population but the women have also been observed taking part in the political activities depicting the behavior of political activism.

This research makes an effort to implement the same knowledge in the domain of politics and policy making to establish a propositional model by logically arguing the political activism in generation Y as result of the correlation of various factors such as **globalization, political activism, behavioral manifestations and generational frame**. This research establishes its propositions pertinent to the characteristics of the generation Y on the premise that, in the contemporary scenario of globalization, the conclusions drawn through application of generational frame are valid across the globe. This research also establishes its premise by referring various published scientific researches which are exhibiting generation Y's unique characteristics in comparison to other generations. On the basis of these premises, this research established the propositions, which are later critically analyzed in the light of the real world evidences from different regions of the world.

This research delineates specific commonality exhibited by generation Y in different global regions, which establishes logic for generalization of the generational research through scientific process. In this way, this research also adds value to generational researchers from different fields of knowledge other than marketing and consumer behavior researchers. This research is also elemental and thought provoking as it will help political stakeholders to understand the phenomenon and its drivers more effectively.

The ontological assumption, therefore, taken here is critical idealist keeping in view the interpretive nature of the work. Critical idealist approach is “critical” because it involves rigorous examination of both phenomena and the identification of the a priori synthetic elements that consciousness must add to the phenomena in order for us to experience the phenomena as we do. This leads to the main premises of investigation of political activism as global phenomenon at this cross-sectional instance and its correlation with generational frame. This leads to the main research question underlined: *is political activism in generation Y a global phenomenon?* This research, therefore, develops following propositions:

Proposition 1: *Generation Y, in different parts of the world, exhibits behavior commonalities*

From the above proposition this research establishes the core proposition:

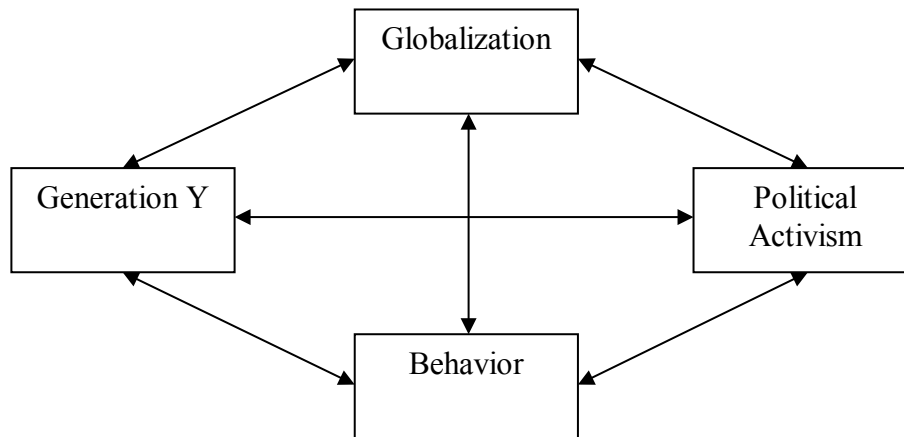
Proposition 2: *Generation Y is politically more active in different parts of the world*

Research Method

This research takes the ontological stance of critical idealist therefore is establishes upon the conceptual model (Fig. 1) to critically analyze and discuss the propositions derived by melting down the published scientific work and real world evidences from different regions of the globe.

This research establishes the conceptual model as given in the Fig. 1 below:

Fig. 1: Conceptual Model



The following section accounts for the operational definitions of the entities exhibited in the conceptual model with respect to this research.

Behavior

Researchers have been trying to understand the behavioral manifestations by using different frames. These frames have discussed the antecedents of behaviors in many ways such as personality type frame as antecedent of certain behaviors etc . Under the frame of personality type, researchers have seen the similarity in behavior as conclusive abstract of specific personality type or the personality type as a construct of similar behavior observed. This personality type

versus behavior debate is rather circular to what cause what (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Judge, Heller, and Mount, 2002; Judge and Bono, 2001; Hines, Hungerford, and Tomera, 1987).

This research, however, peruse with the correlation rather the directional dependence. In pursue to understand the basis of certain behaviors and their origins, such as political activism, this research refers to the generational frame.

Generational Frame

Different generational segmentations highlights the similarities in behaviors found within the generations (Dries et al., 2008; Anantatmula and Shrivastav, 2012; Alestalo, 2010; Geck, 2007) as depicted in Fig 2. Though the generational frame originated and applied in scientific research in USA, it has been found useful in other regions of the world (Macky, et al., 2008). This has not only affected the trade but also has impacted the very roots of the way people live. Humans have always been prone and subjected to the social contents and actors which surround them to define and develop their habits and respective constituting behaviors. The span of environment is subject to the limits of the exposure they get and richness of the interacting minds. It also includes the seeds of adoption and adaption where the exposure forms the way people opt to live and the way people opt to live supplements into deeper flow of the way society moves (Macky, et. al., 2008).

Table 1: Generational Framework

Generation	Birth year	Significant events	General values	Values in work	Motivation
Veterans	1922 - 1945	Great depression, World War II	Conformism, Maturity, Conscientiousness, Thrift	Obedience, Loyalty, Obligation, Security (stability)	Value of experience, Value of perseverance
Baby boomers	1946 - 1964	Moon landing, Restructuring of society, Economic prosperity, Roaring sixties, Yuppie-culture in 80's - foundation of business world	Idealism, Creativity, Tolerance, Freedom, Self-fulfillment	Challenge, Workaholic, Criticism, Innovativeness, Advancement, Sacrifice	Value of contribution, Bonus and other incentives
Generation X	1965 - 1979	Part of welfare state, Depression, Educational opportunities, Aids, Technology usage, Divorce rates	Independence, Skepticism, Flexibility, Control, Fun	Practicality, Learning, Entrepreneurship, Materialism, Work-life balance, Adaptability, Strong career ambition	Non-hierarchical structure, Loyalty, Time-off as incentive
Generation Y	1980 - 2000	Fall of the Berlin Wall, MTV, Internet, digitalization, 9/11, War on Terror, Death of Princess Diana, Adoring parents	Collectivism, Positivity, Moralism, Confidence, Civic mindedness, Diversified, Confidence	Passion, Learning, Security – not stability, Willingness to work, Ambitiousness	Lower need for social approval, Innovation, Monetary gains
Generation Z	2001 -	Great depression started in 2008, No luxury or economic safety		Highly connected with the digital world - digital natives, Creativity	Multi-tasking, Challenge and experience-based learning, Own profiles – individualism, Networking, Diversity

Source: Adopted from (Dries et al., 2008; Anantatmula and Shrivastav, 2012; Alestalo, 2010; Geck, 2007)

The classification of generation birth year and the respective significant events (Table 1) has been highlighted most of which are purely subjected to what has been faced by USA population but as

the model has been generalize it is adapted keeping its original formation at most (Judge and Bono, 2001).

Generation Y

Generational frame has been widely used specially to explain the behaviors of people with respect to the age classification (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte, 2012). Though this frame has been broadly used by the marketing researchers, but its implications have also been seen in number of different domains of knowledge including human resource, policy research and practice, as well as management decision sciences where it has been deployed to study the strategic and operational decision making (Robbins, Judge, Millett, and Boyle, 2013). This notion, although, hypothetically carries the thought that understanding the generation may lead to find similarity in the behaviors and age classification as an important demographic element to support decision making. The similarity, somewhat partially, leads to broad generalizability of certain patterns of behaviors which are embodied in the specific age group thence making generational frame a very subtle perspective to be taken.

Generation Y, born between 1979 and 2000 (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009; Marconi, 2001), may have different preferences than of those from generation X (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009). The behavioral characteristics of generation Y, as evident by the literature, include the impatience, more ambitious in psychological and monitory demands from their jobs, more demanding and daring to get it all (Dries et al., 2008; Lancaster and Stillman, 2002; Lyons et al., 2003).

Political Activism

The scientific publications on political activism focus not only on its causes and effects but also focus on comparative analysis of different ways that people adopt to exhibit their agenda (Norris, 2007). The pioneering thought of political activism has been influenced by the scholars including Almond and Verba (1963), Verba and Nie (1972), Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978), and Barnes and Kaase (1979). In 1980s, the research on political activism majorly comprised of the empirical work evaluating different models of political engagements, besides it also touched the fundamental philosophical assumptions, mostly through survey based approach. The scientific thought of political activism observed significant philosophical progression in 1990s; when major refinements and revisions in the prevailing social psychological version of the thought were incorporated. In this regard, Norris (2007) has made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge by identifying four emerging themes that include: (i) increasing popularity of the significance of the institutional point of view of conventions reserved for electoral turnout; (ii) causes and effects of diminishing trend in the party memberships within democracies; (iii) emerging popularity of adhocism in political affiliations influenced by the thought of social capital; and (iv) the increasing raise in the causal activism, that includes different forms containing the increasing trend of activism with variant political agendas including consumers, professionals, and even the newly formed transnational social movements and advocacy networks.

The evolution of methods of activism is being fueled by not only the political opportunity, but also by the transition in culture and technology. The techniques from consumer studies are being commonly deployed in contemporary political activism which includes creation of confronting messages through transforming the conventional symbols.

The contemporary scientific studies on political activism are focusing on the prevalence of the phenomena among the students and academics since they are spontaneously involved in both academia and activism. These studies are unveiling interesting patterns prevalent within phenomena as the focused population bridges the ideas from different thought streams to co-create new theoretical as well as empirical incidences (Martin, 2007; Roberts, 2004). The contemporary logic builds over the conjecture that firstly the activists share their learning and inspirations; secondly, the people now refuse to accept the authority instead they judge the systems and take active part to correct it. In this scenario, not only the publically available information pertinent to activism but also the raise in the education level of the masses around the globe also affect the whole setting (Norris, 2007).

It is an interesting fact that the contemporary political systems, specifically the democracies, are the consequences of the political activism in the past. These systems, themselves, may pertain only until they respond to everyone's needs, however, this statement seems trivial in itself. The political systems do not evolve until and unless they accept activism as their integral routing part (Norris, 2007). When that happens in the contemporary global scenario, the empirical evidences reflects the tendency of generation Y in assuming the role in politics, therefore, challenging the injustices of whatever system is in place (Norris, 2007; Smith et al., 2014).

Globalization

Globalization and other technological advancements which have broadened the exposure from localities to globalities have changed the way people use to live in silos. This has not only opened the windows of communication but also has also resulted in creation of similarity in the way people behaves or in other words have deciphered overlapping generational behavioral conjuncture (Hines, et. al., 1987). The cultures are prone to constructive destruction and world as one is raising universal behavioral patterns such as political activism which is highlighted in this study hence making the generational frame universally applicable. Generational frame has now been spread and observed across the globe and has been found useful in explaining various behavioral similarities (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Although the segregation may seem very simple as it is based on the time period slots but the underlined context such as the major events happened in that specific time and space are very promising in shaping up the behaviors of individuals and groups encapsulated (Robbins, et. al., 2013).

Interrelationship of Generation Y, Behavior, Political Activism, and Globalization

The contemporary challenge to the researchers and practitioners is the change of generation of the workforce. The behavioral studies available suggest variant behavioral patterns exhibited by the workers belonging to distinct generations in terms of ideals, manners, and prospects (*The Economist*, 2008). The initial studies over behavioral patterns of the people born between 1979 and 2000 titled them as “Baby Boom Echo” as this generation is the proceeding generation of Baby Boomers (Foot and Stoffman, 1998). This generation; given variant names by different researchers, e.g. Generation Y, Nexters, and the Nexus Generation; has faced major events including the global expansion, increasing adoption of technology, and increase in demographical diversities. Generation Y, including incline libertarian, recognize as autonomous and generally

vote Democrat. On the off chance that you were a Republican strategist, the exploration may recommend three techniques:

Generation Y, however, are an intriguing case. From one viewpoint, they have a tendency to be the slightest urbanely mindful, captivated and religiously unaffiliated era, yet despite everything they have a tendency to hold to solid ideological perspectives on a scope of issues, including fetus removal, the size and extent of government and the utilization of politics to secure individual ethical quality. Research have depicted that Generation Y are very concerned about the size and extent of government and that administration and politics ought to accomplish more to secure individual ethical quality (Anantatmula and Shrivastav, 2012). Research has been led previously across the globe on the political mentality and convictions of Generation Y. It discovered what they called "enlightening bits of knowledge." Reason battles that the Generation Y is an undiscovered political asset, one that can if legitimately inspired move the current constituent scene.

Initially, the Generation Y doesn't buckle on key ideological standards, particularly advancing individual freedom. Generation Y, whether religious or not, exceedingly esteem open approaches that grasp flexibility, for example, decriminalization of medications and gay marriage. Second, Generation Y is prepared for political and profound recovery. This is clear; it appears, considering their institutionally religious non-association and political heterogeneity. The kind of hopeful they will incline toward is one ready to avoid national and worldwide patterns and think creatively and imaginatively. Third, Generation Y is a fiery dynamo. They are prepared to act and serve. They long for attempting to address and take care of issues. They don't take no for an answer. They are

not intrigued by debating interminably; they think that it monotonous and inefficient. So set them to work.

In the event that these methodologies are joined with a cutting edge canny unparalleled throughout the most recent 50 years, Generation Y will have noteworthy effect upon the political and arrangement world. The capacity of Gen Y to influence change was first seen in the election of Barack Obama as President of the US. With his amicable appeal and simple mottos, he showed up as a progressive figure that could satisfy Gen Y's dreams of how a nation should prosper and deal with the needs of people. Whether he has succeeded or not is for history to choose, yet that was a marvelous depiction of how Generation Y can arrange to move the political scene totally.

Likewise with all eras, Malaysia's Gen Y will have political leanings in all shades, with some on the edges of both the compelling right and left, however the more taught and associated will constantly tend towards liberal qualities. This is an extraordinary point to consider for any gathering that values maintaining the privileges of the discouraged. Generation Y aren't any more fractional than their elderly folks to higher expenses, and are by and large seen to be un-steady of gifts, accepting that no one owes them a living.

Empirical Evidences of Political Activism in Gen Y

The literature as well as media reports provide a rich view of generation Y as being politically active around the globe. Following are a few of certain prominent empirical evidences that support the cardiac proposition of this research. These evidences include those from distinct corners of the world, e.g. Pakistan, Turkey, Hong Kong, Quebec, UK, USA, and Chile.

In Pakistan, the media reports provide the evidence of the increasing interest of generation Y in the political activities since the start of the new millennium. Table 2 exhibits that the elections held in 2013 tolled 55% voting turnout, which is the highest figure achieved in the last four decades (Voting Turnout in Pakistan, 2013; Election, 2013; Pakistan elections 2013 total voter turnout 55%, 2013):

Table 2: Voting Turnout in Pakistan

Year	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002	2008	2013
Turnout	43.07%	45.46%	40.28%	35.42%	41.08%	44.23%	55.02%

Source: Voting Turnout in Pakistan (2013) by Election Commission of Pakistan

Pakistan, in 2014, is facing high level of political unrest as two political parties have taken their positions against the alleged rigging in election 2013 by the ruling party by recording their protest through long march towards the capital city. Although both parties contrast their public image, one considered as liberal while other conservative, but both of them shared two common attributes: (i) high level of participation by those falling in the age group of generation Y, and (ii) unusual gender-mix ratio, i.e. more women, though they are still lesser than men, have participated in the political marches. Despite of unusual delay and increasing polarity between the

government and the protestors, the young supporters of the opposition party are in no mode to back off until reach some logical end of the contention.

Hong Kong witnessed a young man – Joshua Wong – leading the “Umbrella Revolution” in September 2014. Such kind of political main stage activity lead by a person, who is not in his fifties, has never been witnessed in the history of Hong Kong. The history of Hong Kong witnessed another turning point in national politics in shape of “Occupy Central” movement against the Beijing’s decision to not allow open nominations for candidates for the 2017 elections (Avsaroglu, 2014). This movement was started by college and university students, therefore large participation of generation Y was also witnessed who believe in the democracy beyond elections.

Turkey also witnessed its generation Y taking serious political stance against government in 2013. The nationwide rallies, named as Gezi Park Protests, started against the crackdown on a meeting against the government decision of city center renovation plan as the youth of the nation declared it against the national interest. The empirical survey reports conclude that the average age of protestors in this nationwide series of rallies was 28; with 31% of the protestors ranged between 21 and 25 years and 20% ranged between 26 and 30 years (Gezi Report, 2014). The position taken by generation Y against the construction plans for Beyoğlu and the Taksim development was later held justified by the court which resulted in the rolling back of government plans in response to the opposition of the nation’s youth.

USA, in 2011, the demonstrators belonging to generation Y lead the most popular anti-capitalism protest namely “Occupy Wall Street”. This protest was started and initially fueled by the demonstrators belonging to the age group of generation Y organized largely through social media

(occupywallst.org; 2014). However, as the protest grew, the demonstrators from other age groups (belonging to other generations) also joined in.

Quebec faced the protest by the demonstrators belonging to generation Y age group as they gathered against the governmental decision of rise in university tuition fee in 2012 (Winograd and Hais, 2014). The protest as it gained popularity across the country resulted in the rolling back of governmental decision, therefore, acknowledged the assumption of political activism by generation Y in Quebec as well.

UK government came across the political challenge of its kind as their youth generally belonging to generation Y refused to accept the decision of raise in tuition fee in 2012. The youth displayed their political significance as 10,000 of them gathered in the streets of London to protest against the raise in tuition fee as well as youth unemployment. Although the political pressure exerted by youth was high, but the government tactfully managed it and resumed with its policies (Wagner, 2014). The lesson from this case is not about who won and who lost; rather it is just to elaborate the notion of rising political activism to a significant level among the generation Y in another part of the world.

Chilean students started their protest against their existing educational framework and demanded for its replacement with a new one in 2011. The protest which started as the series of demonstrations to receive acknowledgement of certain demands by government, later took shape of a political campaign which is now being considered as one of the major factors of dramatic all in former Chilean President Sebastián Piñera's approval rating.

Discussion and Conclusions

Above empirical evidences establish the premise that it is not about the success of generation Y in getting the approval of their demand through their political pressure, rather it is all about the reinforcement of the behavior of generation Y to become politically active. Every emerging protest or political movement around the globe witness the increased participation of generation Y, therefore support the cardiac proposition of this research that generation Y around the globe is becoming politically active due to their behavioral characteristics of opposing inequality and oppression. Another notion of this study is to high light the similar patterns of behaviors that has been observed rooting the global political activism in generation Y or Generation Y.

Patterns of behaviors generation Y causing political activism

This is a theoretical work which tends to focus that the political activism in gen Y has been seen not only in USA, Malaysia and Pakistan but around the globe and hence is proposed as the global Phenomenon. This aspect has been seen and discussed in many countries and the work seeks to propose it as a global phenomenon and the underlined reason found was a similar set of behaviors in the generation Y which has been seen active in both males and females (Alestalo, 2010).

Research conducted by “Reason's information” asserts that Generation Y are "socially liberal and financially direct" with two times more recognizing toward oneself as liberals and Democrats than preservationists and Republicans. Reason's information helps Pew information (Ng, 2014) that Generation Y emphatically help a bigger government, especially in social regions, while they slant more progressive or even libertarian on financial issues and explains there comparative interest in politics more than the similar age fellows in previous generation in previous couple of decades

(King, 2014). This is maybe determined by Gen Y's inclination to be determined by issues and not by talk, and since no gathering is by all accounts inspired by striking a harmony between conservative and left-wing approaches, the Generation Y are not intrigued by broadcasting dedication to any gathering specifically. All things considered, in spite of the leanings towards liberal standards said above, Generation Y are additionally monetarily preservationist and depicts political activism.

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