A Sociological investigation of the Effect of Satellite on the Religious Identity of the Youth of Tehran City

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study is to investigate sociologically the effect of satellite on the religious identity youth of Tehran city. The present study is conducted using a survey method with a sample size includes 300 young people between 19 to 29 years old residing in Tehran who used satellite programs continuously. To explain the variables, the theories of scholars of media and sociologists such as Clapper, Newman, Robertson, Harvey and Giddens were used. The research instrument for collecting date was a researcher-made questionnaire whose validity was confirmed by face validity and reliability was attested by Cronbach alpha. The findings of the study were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics and using SPSS. The results of the correlation test indicate that there is a negative and significant correlation between watching satellite programs and religious identity. Therefore, satellite networks can influence their audience by presenting diverse programs in different fields such as consumption, social and cultural dimension, national, religious and even local identity of the audience's country and in case of the lack of knowledge of the outcomes and the lack of principled and wise planning in line with encountering it, it will face the cultural, social and religious background with difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Identity refers to our image or knowledge of ourselves in front of others. According to this definition, our knowledge of ourselves is obtained when we represent ourselves in front of another person and consider the factor of knowledge as what is the our distinguishing aspect with others. In this case, what is the main principle of our identity is not something other than the presence of other different from us. It should be noted that the identity-giving factors of individuals are different and multifaceted. For example, for a human, father, mother, birthplace and nationality and ideology are among the identity-giving factors. For a country, geographical region, population and kind of political regime are among the identity-constructing resources and for a nation, culture, religion, history and language and other cases are considered as the identity-making resources. In fact, when an individual encounters in front of other, he refers to these resources for defining itself.

However, the constructive elements of identity during different time and places do not remain fixed and continuously are changing from one form to another. It should be known that the identity resources and the mode of constructing identity in two modern and traditional or at least growing societies have basic differences. The process of globalization and consequently its growth and basic transformation of communicating devices particularly satellite, through reconstructing the space and time, making permeable borders and the significant expansion of communication lines and the social space and relations, has faced to a great extent with challenges the necessary resources and conditions for traditional identity making and sense constructing. Therefore, a kind of identity and sense crisis has been engendered which makes the construction of identity inescapable.

One of the most important instruments and representations of the modern and complicated world of today is the growth and the increasing occurrence of new TV networks versus satellite which presents programs which
enjoy contents with same breadth of all dimensions of social life of human beings of today. What is obvious is a phenomenon with such dimensions will change not only the representations of social life but also the identity basics of human beings in a macro level.

According to Anthony Giddens, the new world has been severely influenced by communications and the extension of new communication devices in such a way that encountering it is an inescapable issue. Newspapers, magazines, cinema, TV and other media devices are considered wrongly as an entertaining approach while this view is totally incorrect.

With a little thought in the growth and the limitless expansion of communication and communication technologies (particularly satellite and the Internet) we find that it is not greatly exaggerating if one can call the new era as the era of modern communications. This issue is clearly observable in ideas of people such as Daniel Bell (The End of Ideology) and Fukuyama (The End of History).

At the moment, in addition to hundreds of English TV networks or other languages of the world; more than 40 Persian network are broadcasting political, news, film, show and other programs. Regarding the high volume of these programs and multiple identity-constructing resources, one can clearly observe the upheavals and transformation in religious and identity values and images of people. What is obvious is that in recent years, among the ideas of Iran's statesmen, there have been discrepancies on the issue of the freedom of satellite programs or its forbiddiness. The advocates the use of satellite programs with the emphasis on the principle of "free flow of information" emphasize on useful programs and satellite networks and take them as unavoidable, while the opponents of using satellite programs with the emphasis on the principle of "uneven flow of information", take them at the service of the great powers and colonialists and want their forbiddiness. However, regarding the occurrence of such discrepancies in relation with suing or non-using satellite networks among the statesmen and also the social outcomes of such a phenomenon which can directly influence the religious identity, the study and investigation of this phenomenon seems inevitable. Researching on the tentative outcomes is a work which can be done for preparation and adoption of any strategy regarding this issue and only under the light of these studies that one can, in addition to drawing the macro policy in encountering this inevitable process, possibly with utilizing new communication and information technologies as well as with wisdom and regarding the national and religious values and using experts’ ideas of this domain, attain some basic and systematic solutions to utilize this technology. Therefore, the present study is to investigate sociologically the effect of satellite on religious identity of the youth of Tehran.

Review of literature:

The effect of media on the audience is among the main discussions of the sociology of communications and has assigned to itself an extensive range of theories related to the effect of media. These theories, during the conducted researches, have gradually changed the researchers’ consideration of media. In general, these researchers is dividable into three periods:

The first period is related to the theories about the powerful effect of media, the second is related to the theories about the media and the third period refers to the provided theories about the growth and re-advent of powerful media.

Here, it is necessary to have a brief review on the theories of these three periods regarding communications and the advent of the devices and instrument of communication which have imposed their influences on the societies.

The first period which is related forming and expanding the media, endured from the beginning of 20th century the late of the century. In this period, media had a significant growth and development and the presented theories in this period had significant, powerful, destructive and unidirectional effect on the audience.

Accordingly, the theories of this period has been presented to explicate the influence of media messages on the audience dominated by the theories such as magic bullet, needle and stimulus-response theory. Magic bullet theory as the first theories presented regarding this issue claims that every message which can reach via mass media to the threshold of an individual's knowledge will influence it quickly and directly. This theory was interpreted by the social scholars and public opinion using experiential observation and the content of sent messages of the mass devices of the time.

The thoughts of this period of time are founded on three presuppositions. The first is that what plays roles in the process of influencing audiences is not something other than the media content. The second is that the reaction of media audience occurs in the same way. The third is that the efficacy of media is directly, immediately and instantaneously.

The second period started when the researchers doubted in the powerful effect of media and did not find evidence signifying the experiential correctness of the mentioned theories. This period was composed of theories about the limited effect of media which endured from the World War II to the early 70's. In this period, scholars of media doubted in the powerful effect of media and put their main emphasis on the amount of using different media in line with motivating programs to reflect the damaging outcomes of the factors such as the occurrence of crimes, rape or sexual stimuli, racism and ....
Clapper discusses the thought of this period as such: "mass communication usually is not the sufficient and necessary reason of influencing the audience but it acts as part of a set of mediating factors". To his view, mass communication is not considered the only concluding factor of transferring concepts for the audience, but mass communication are also is not mainly considered as the institutionalization of the present attitudes and a determining factor for changing the attitudes and forming new attitudes in people.

However, by passing less than two decades, the belief in the powerful effect of media revived. After that some theories regarding this issue were presented signifying that media are lacking in direct influence and they influence individuals' behavior and identities indirectly, recent researches criticized the results of these theories. This movement takes a more moderate position than two mentioned theories and were mainly presented in 70's and 80's. One of the reasons of the unacceptance of the theories of the limited effect of media was the advent of TV as a new media in the middle decades of 20th century. TV enjoyed more attraction than previous media and could have more influences on individuals' identities; therefore, it seems that form social life, it had more effects.

Elizabeth Nuelle Neumann was the first scholar who spoke of "return" to the idea of powerful media. She in an article titled as "Return to the concept of powerful mass media" theorized her ideas. Neumann's Spiral of Silence Theory was greatly consistent with the model of the powerful effects of media. Simultaneously, other researches were conducted in this regard which indicated the powerful effect of media. In addition, the Spiral of Silence Theory in the third period of other theories such as "cultivation and highlighting theory" are presented.

With the development of science and communication technology, conditions were engendered during which human beings attained a profound perception of time and space. Time was no longer limited to now, it covered the future and past. Therefore, with the development of science and technology (as Giddens believes) and the emphasis of capitalism on the expansion of itself in the world level (Harvey), human beings attained the increasing communication production and tools which resulted in the factors of further compression of time and space. Telephone, fax, radio, the Internet and particularly satellite all produced as tools for the realization of this issue and human access to very far spaces.

This issue caused that individual could communicate concurrent with outer worlds and utilize the outer spaces of here and now as they live is a certain time and space.

It should be considered that these conditions have been the only conditions for the occurrence of the issue of globalization and access to a unified world. As Robertson believes: globalization occurs only when the world image as an integrated whole has been formed in contemporary with increasing compaction of the world's development and modernity.

On the other hand, as discussed in the issue of "identity", individuals' identity depends on all affairs which they all are involved in all paths of their lives and they have been influenced by and influence.

Therefore, individuals in their encountering the world and influencing and being influenced by it, construct their identities and based on it they define themselves and make themselves as distinct from others. Regarding this point that what is the factor of identity making and identity constructing of an individual, group or a country is factor or factors which in the path of selecting the action, he will encounter them and influence them. However, regarding what has been discussed, contrary to previous periods when identity making resources of an individual were assigned to limited resource in such a way that any social activity of individuals and their social action is cons.

According to David Harvey, in the age of communication, social life, to a great extent has been accelerated in such a way that any social activity of individuals and their social action is constructed in temporal and social frameworks which is so limited and reduced or totally removed that we are observing this situation in the case of transferring and receiving immediately the thoughts and information from all over the world using satellite communications.

Regarding the cultural crises, it is this cultural gap (pluralism) which has resulted in the advent of cultural-ideological frames postmodernity. Postmodernity is "the cultural logic of the late capitalism" and cultural production increasingly has resulted in a new aesthetic sensitivity for attracting the goods production of this issue. The unending search for new markets, quick changes of goods and continuous manipulation of people's tastes and their beliefs through advertisement cause the creation of postmodernism culture whose characteristics is instability and shallow thoughts instead of profound senses, montage and the differences in methods instead of originality and at last heterogeneity, pluralism, discontinuity and anomaly all are among the issues which have transformed individuals' identities.

Anthony Giddens knows globalization the result of the disruption of traditional order in space and time by which the disruption of time and space has occurred. These space and time separated from space are combined and coordinated in an indefinite range with each other and provides the social action and relations in a greater
According to Anthony Giddens, identity which in the world of tradition is focused on a particular place, apace and time, in the modern world is fluidized ad due to being displaced form that space and time caused transformation of new identity and its fragmentation in relation with previous periods. In other words, in the previous periods, human beings could perceive time only when they would be put in a certain space and by understating the present space they would attain knowledge of time. In modern era, there is no necessity that individuals in a certain geographical place experience the space related to the place, but with the occurrence of the expansion of the compression of time, the space and its separation form the place, a possibility was provided that was in a single moment in a particular place and in a space related to another space. This issue caused that other "identity" resources simply are not focused to a certain space, but individuals, at the same time which live in the geographical place A, are influenced by space B or live in another time of history.

Robertson, in relation with the identity crisis of the new world believes that: contrary to previous periods in which individuals' identity crisis was related to the selection of local-ethnic identity-making elements and national-societal characteristics, in the age of globalization due to the age of communications, all human societies will be involved in the issue of "identity" because individuals' relations with each other and knowledge of other cultural values influence a human's perception of himself and his identity. Therefore, with the knowledge of other societies, individuals will be aware of different values and norms by which they can select themselves and form their identities.

Methodology:

The research method is cross-sectional and exploratory. To conduct the research, a survey research was employed using questionnaire. The required data for this research were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire which was standardized based on the indices of the research variables. The questionnaire included different sections of personal characteristics and multidimensional scales for evaluating the use and the quiddity of satellite programs regarding the nature of programs for evaluation of individuals' identity. Every section of the questionnaire, appropriate to the theoretical framework which was with open and closed questions or in the form of a scale was filled personally by the participants themselves. In the present study, random sampling was used to select the 19 to 29 year old youth who in 2007 resided in Tehran and continuously used satellite programs. But the number of this people was not clear because of the lack of official data in this field due to lack of freedom and illegitimacy of using satellite in Iran. Because of the lack of a framework for accurate sampling, however the researchers tried to randomly select the participants, in general, the sampling method was non-probability method of purposive cases. The SPSS software program was used to the data analysis and the final codification. The final and practical analysis was conducted based on the ideas of important scholars working in the fields of religion and globalization as well as the nature of the effects of the modern communication tools.

Results:

Table 1: the amount of viewers of satellite programs based on gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed, 53 percent of viewers are male and 47 percent are female.

Table 2: the frequency distribution of participants based on age of the viewers of satellite programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-19</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-25</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amount of the viewers of satellite programs based on age indicate that 57 percent of the viewers are between 19-24 years old and 43 percent of viewers are between 25-29 years old.

Table 3: the frequency distribution of participants based on the amount of the educational level of viewers of satellite programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma and lower</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate diploma</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MSc and higher</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As observed, 33 percent of the participants' educational level are diploma and lower and 27 percent of them hold associate diploma and 27 percent BA. 13 percent of the participants hold MA/MSc and higher.

### Table 4: the frequency distribution of participants based on the amount of the hours of watching satellite programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of watching satellite</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 h</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 h</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 h and more</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed, 13 percent of the viewers watch the satellite programs for 2 hours and 27 percent of them about 4 hours while 60 percent of participants about 6 hours and more.

**Investigating hypotheses**

**The 1st hypothesis:** there is a correlation between the amount of watching satellite and religious identity.

### Table 5: the correlation between watching satellite and religious identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Amount of t</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching satellite</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>8/808</td>
<td>0/00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = 57.77 Sig F = 0.000

These results indicate a correlation between watching satellite and religious identity. The implicit hypothesis of the research was that the more the amount of watching satellite, the less the religious identity level. Regarding the coefficient of determination was evaluated with $R^2$ equal as 742 variations of the dependent variable of religious identity due to watching satellite. The Beta coefficient indicate the figure -861 which according to the expectation, this correlation is negative and reverse. Therefore, the more the amount of watching satellite, the less the religious identity and the regression coefficient is -805. Therefore, the above correlation, regarding the amount of obtained t equal as -8.808 and with probability level 95 percent (Sig = 0.000) is significant and the hypothesis is confirmed.

**The second hypothesis:** there is a correlation between different satellite programs and religious identity.

### Table 6: the correlation between watching different kinds of satellite programs and religious identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Amount of t</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching different</td>
<td>-117</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>-0.088</td>
<td>-1/112</td>
<td>1/112</td>
<td>0/14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = 1.99 Sig F = 0.16

The results of this table indicate that there is a correlation between watching different kinds of satellite programs and religious identity. The implicit hypothesis of the research is that different kinds of satellite programs are effective on religious identity. Regarding the coefficient of determination with $R^2$ equal as 0.014, the variations of the dependent variable of religious identity due to watching satellite programs. Beta coefficient indicate the value -0.117 and the regression coefficient is equal -0.088. Therefore, the mentioned correlation with the t value equal as -1.112 is not significant and the hypothesis is rejected. It should be noted that among the different kinds of programs (scientific, news, political and entertaining) there is a particular correlation which is not significant.

**Discussion and conclusion:**

Since the objective and the aim of the preset study is to evaluate the amount of the effects of using satellite programs on religious identity of the youth of Tehran, there are researches conducted whose findings and results are the main motivation of research advancement. The questions were as follows: to what extent can satellite programs as one of the symbols of globalization which are presented in most of the ideas of scholars in the form of global village, influence the youth' religious identity as a level of collective identity? In case of the existence of any correlation, it is in a positive or negative direction? Which programs (with which content) have more amount of positive correlation with religious identity determine the direction of the correlations?

Accordingly, a great deal of efforts were devoted to discuss and investigate the quiddity of the relations of the mentioned concepts and to present explicatory theories in addition to review the important theories presented.
in two fields of religious identity and globalization and the occurrence and advent of new communication technologies such as satellite regarding the main concepts of the research.

Regarding what is discussed, since the statistical population of the research included the youth of Tehran and since the youth is considered a layer of layers apparently influential on every society, this group are subject to identity changes and its identity dimensions are more flexible and fluid than other groups; therefore, this group enjoys a great importance for conducting the study as the selected statistical population. The first hypothesis was to investigate the correlation between two variables of the amount of using satellite and religious identity. It means that religious identity reversely depends on the amount of using foreign satellite programs.

Regarding the presented theories for explicating the correlation between these two concepts, the more the individuals use satellite programs, the less their tendency to religious identity and vice versa.

Therefore, what are presented by important theorists such as Anthony Giddens and David Harvey, as the most important scholars of globalization, emphasized the reductionist and economic-centered approach of those such as Wallerstein on the cultural and social aspects of the process of globalization. This important phenomenon of today is the result of disordering the traditional discipline of space and time which occur by such a disruption of the space and time. Therefore, the inevitable disruption, in an indefinite range, has been combined and coordinated which necessitates the possibility of the social action and relations in a bigger society.

Therefore, unlike the past in which "identity" resources of individuals were limited to their surrounding environment, the individuals only encountered the limited identity resources which covered more limited roles as well.

However, nowadays and by the development of communication media (particularly satellite phenomenon) and collapsing the boundaries of identity which in sometimes are catastrophic, modern human beings encounter a multiple identity resources and they should select one or a combination of them to attain the desired objectives of their social lives.

Satellite networks, with providing diverse programs which from everywhere and every possible form can be prepared and presented. In fact can be discussed that undoubtedly they are considered as one of the most important identity resources in individuals (particularly the youth). Therefore, regarding the presented ideas of the scholars as well as the objective evidence of the present study, it is utterly evident that in general, using satellite programs which generally suffer from immoral and advertisement nature effectively have negative influence on individuals’ identity particularly their religious identity and they cause that the individuals in encountering new conditions and situations, suffer from a kind of crisis or at least an identity stagnation and they put aside their previous identity for the sake of the new conditions or at least they make some changes in their identities.

The second hypothesis considered different kinds of using satellite programs and religious identity. In investigation of the amount of the effect of different kinds of satellite programs on the religious identity, we can find that there is a particular correlation between these different programs and religious identity.

The statistics of the study indicate that the correlations between the variables in four scientific, news, political and entertaining programs are negative.

However, as Peter Burger declares, unlike what he and other scholars of religious field declares, in new era and acceleration of modernity, the amount of expansion of religion in social life has not been reduced, but except in some cases (western Europe and international micro culture with higher education) its efficacy increased. In the dimension of globalization, the culture of globalization causes the convergence of religion, which this issue reinforces its shared global bases of.

In spite of the thought of some scholars, in modernity era and information explosion as well as the combination of cultures, religion will be isolated, while it should be said that globalization will not marginalizes religion, but it guides human in the context of his psychological concerns.

However, using satellite networks will act like using other tools of influencing and expanding globalization and will be a factor in line with the assimilation and integration of cultures and lifestyles of the societies. Since in this market, the developed western countries’ media, in terms of technology, enjoy the instrument of producing more messages; therefore, in the field of transferring and promoting the culture desired by themselves, the media will be more effective among global audiences. This issue has caused that in the cultural level in this media is the factor of the hegemony of dominant culture of these countries over other countries with different cultures. Accordingly, western lifestyle and the criteria of better live, emphasizing the western criteria, dominate over the development culture of other societies and all societies are evaluated in a system of unitary development criteria whose ultimate results is the domination of the West over other societies. In the level of economy and consuming culture, there is a kind of relations during which consumerism increases in the target countries. This issue generally occur because of the fact that principally it is considered as one of the most important reasons of production and use of media and satellites and production of message by countries owning the instruments, the message of this media by countries owning the production of messages and creating markets for selling economic products. Therefore, this satellite networks can influence social and cultural dimensions of
national, religious and even local identity of the target countries by providing diverse programs in terms of consumerism. Therefore, many scholars believe that the expansion of global phenomenon and the development of media have influenced the national, religious and cultural elements of the target countries that in case of the lack of knowledge of the outcomes and the lack of systematic planning in line with encountering it will face its cultural, social, political, economic and particularly religious backgrounds with serious challenge, while some scholars believe that although theoretically and methodologically in most of the done researches in the field of the effects of satellite on the cultural-political and religious context of countries, it should not be neglected that this phenomenon can have positive and constructive outcomes in many fields in addition to its destructive results. For example, the field of the economy of globalization could pave the path of the economic development and growth for many countries through extensive advertisement and the Internet of itself and all economic parts. Furthermore, among other important components this phenomenon, one can mention the creation of the grounds of investment and increase in the trading goods and services, internationalization of production and services and … .

REFERENCES