

## Fluid Relationships of Young Individuals of the Digital Age Based on Distrust and Uncertainty

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**Abstract** – The world has been developing and transforming, for better or worse, since humans have existed and interacted with each other. Because, depending on the developments, the values and behavioral patterns of individuals and societies are constantly changing. In today's societies, where information and communication technologies are rapidly developing, the process of adapting to the digital world changes our cultural values, moral norms, business and social lives, in short, our daily lives. The values of young individuals, who are defined as the digital generation and who were introduced to the internet before school age, are quite different from the values of previous generations. Perhaps the biggest difference that distinguishes today's young individuals from other generations is that they were born in a period when change was very rapid and experienced in fractures. In this context, young individuals of the digital world love change, transformation and innovation, but as speed enthusiasts, they are more inclined to do everything practically, quickly and get results immediately. At this point, the relationships of young individuals in their daily lives appear to be extremely fluid, fast, fragile and result-oriented. As a matter of fact, in this text, the issue of the fluidity of daily relationships of young individuals in a digital society where individualization is increasing all over the world is discussed on a sociological basis. Because, in our world where individualization is excessive, relationships are like a double-edged sword. Individuals oscillate between beautiful dreams and nightmares, it is not known when one will turn into the other. Most of the time, these two states coexist, albeit at different levels of consciousness. After all, in today's digital world, the stability and reliability of the human relations network is not getting any better.

**Keywords** – Digital Age, Young Individuals, Insecurity, Fluid Relationships.

### I. INTRODUCTION

As the concept of society and related concepts such as social structure, country, nation, and social body are insufficient to understand the contemporary world, attention is now drawn to the necessity of a new metaphor. Relationships that span the whole world and interactions that transcend national borders are becoming more and more decisive. Social institutions are experiencing a process of collapse. Cultural corridors and migration flows that cross the world create transnational communities, and solid interpersonal ties are replaced by liquid, fluid ties. For this reason, it is emphasized that the 'fluidity' metaphor seems more appropriate in understanding the world

(Bilgin, 2007:20). In today's societies, where information and communication technologies are rapidly developing, the process of adapting to the digital world changes our cultural values, moral norms, business and social lives, in short, our daily lives. Young individuals who were born in an age where technological developments accelerated and who have been in touch with technology from an early age are an HTML and GSM-based generation with many features (Şenbir, 2004:26). In this context, the most important thing that determines the identity, personality and self of the digital generation is digital technologies, which include new socialization tools, including written and visual media (Duman and Güngörmez, 2022:207-

208). Environmental problems, terrorism, migrations, wars, economic and political crises come to the fore among the factors affecting the character of the digital generation, which is described as the children of a troubled world. Particularly, individuals of the digital generation, who encountered unemployment and economic difficulties as a result of the global crisis at an early age, have been tried to be raised as combative and competitive individuals by gaining social awareness. Additionally, this generation differs from other generations in terms of perception of privacy.

The values of young individuals, who are defined as the digital generation and who were introduced to the internet before school age, are quite different from the values of previous generations. This generation, which was born in the center of the digital world, has never seen a world without tablets, smart phones and internet technology, and whose lifestyle is information technologies, can access the information they want in "one click", in their own words, and can communicate with each other verbally and visually. In this context, in today's world, where sociality is replaced by virtuality and face-to-face meetings are replaced by distance communication with digitalization, it is inevitable for the individuals of the digital generation to move away from traditional values and therefore become alienated from their own culture. The socialization process, which connects the person to the society and social world in which he/she lives and at the same time gives an identity and personality, has entered a process of deformation both structurally and institutionally with digitalization. The socialization process no longer takes place only in the family, where primary and face-to-face relationships dominate, as in the traditional world. In the rapidly globalizing world with the digitalization process, national values are replaced by universal values, which naturally causes the individual to move away from his environment, culture, traditional values, and even experience identity crises at the ontological level. In the literature, the concept of alienation is generally used for this situation, and this concept manifests itself especially with generation conflict within the family. Because there are differences in age, perception, attitude and behavior among

family members (Duman and Güngörmez, 2022: 210).

Thanks to rapidly developing information and communication technologies, differences between generations are also increasing rapidly. As a matter of fact, this generation, which differs from previous generations in terms of digitalization, feels safe and even at home in the digital environment and does not prefer to stay away from this environment. In addition, this generation, which experts describe as deeply emotional (Adıgüzel, et al., 2014:174), attaches great importance to the interaction they receive on social media, and in this sense, they construct their social media accounts by considering the image they will leave on others (Taşdelen and Özkan, 2019:63). In addition to the importance of image, generation members who emulate the lifestyles they witness on social media can show multiple personality traits by having more than one account on social media. Since individuals of the digital generation expect everything to be special to them, they want to choose and shape everything around them as they wish.

Perhaps the biggest difference that distinguishes the young individuals of the digital world from other generations is that they were born in a period when change was very rapid and experienced in breaks. In this context, young individuals of the digital world love change, transformation and innovation, but as speed enthusiasts, they are more inclined to do everything practically, quickly and get results immediately. At this point, the relationships of young individuals in their daily lives appear to be extremely fluid, fast, fragile and result-oriented. As a matter of fact, in this text, the issue of the fluidity of daily relationships of young individuals in a digital society where individualization is increasing all over the world is discussed on a sociological basis. Because, in our world where individualization is excessive, relationships are like a double-edged sword. Individuals oscillate between beautiful dreams and nightmares, it is not known when one will turn into the other. Most of the time, these two states coexist, albeit at different levels of consciousness. After all, in today's digital world, the stability and reliability of the human relations network is not getting any better.

## II. THE NATURE OF FLUID RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON DISTRUST IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Agriculture, industry, consumption, etc. for societies from the first stages of history to the present day. There were many stages in which different conditions were effective. There are different values, management approaches and relationship systems that societies have in each period. Since each social stage takes its roots from the previous period, in other words, because it matured in the previous period, it still carries originality with its differentiating aspects, although it carries the traces of the past. In this regard, today's age is experiencing a process that has significant differences and characteristics from past periods. Change and transformation are the most indisputable reality of social history. From this point of view, there is no society in which change and transformation do not occur. However, rapid development, happening on a global scale, and the rapid internalization of these changes and transformations by societies can be expressed as the main features that distinguish the changes and transformations experienced today from their counterparts in the past.

The world has been developing and transforming positively and negatively since humans have existed and interacted with each other. Because the values and behavioral patterns of individuals and societies are constantly changing depending on the developments. In this period, called the digital age, these changes are taking place much faster and more radically. The age we live in is, in the words of Anthony Giddens (1991), the age of "pure relationship". This is a relationship that is "entered into for its own sake, for what the parties to the relationship can gain" and therefore "both parties can end it at any point and more or less arbitrarily." The stability and reliability of the network of human relations is not getting better. Our age is the age of "togetherness love" that is "not in good terms with the 'forever' and 'one and only' features of the romantic love complex"; so much so that "love can no longer be identified with continuity". Again, our age is the age of "plastic sexuality", that is, the age of sexual pleasure "separated from its age-old integrity with reproduction, kinship and generations". One no longer dares to give an identity to relationships that are themselves

irreparably "volatile" (Bauman, 2001: 123). In our age, the number of people who call more than one experience in their lives love, who cannot be assured that the love they are experiencing is the last, and who think that they will experience love in the future is rapidly increasing. The definition of romantic love as "till death do us part" is definitely outdated. The end result of this concept, however, is inevitably a simplification of the tests an experience must pass to be called "love." Rather than many people being generally raised to the higher standards of love, these standards are lowered. As a result, the range of experiences called love has evolved significantly. One-night stands have been implied under the code name of making love (Bauman, 2017: 19-20).

In our world where individualization is abundant, relationships are like a double-edged sword. They oscillate between beautiful dreams and nightmares, it is not known when one will turn into the other. Most of the time, these two states coexist, albeit at different levels of consciousness. Within the framework of a fluid modern life, relationships are the manifestation of the most vivid, the most irresistible, the most deeply felt and the most widespread antonyms. This situation shows that modern fluid individuals who have become individuals by decree are a trap, and that commitment, especially long-term commitment, is a trap, and the attempt to establish a relationship should avoid this more than any other danger. Committing, even reluctantly, means closing the door to other romantic possibilities that could be much more fulfilling and fulfilling. Promises of loyalty are meaningless in the long run. Like other investments, these too fade out (Bauman, 2017:

In our individualized society, we expect friends and friendship to play a vital role. In such a period when social solidarity and traditional support elements are rapidly becoming disabled, relationships woven with friendship can be our life jackets and lifeboats. Although we think of friendship as our natural choice as the "archetype of social relations based on choice" in the age of choice we live in, the truth is not that simple. In the fluid age we live in, the issue of relationships is an ambiguous issue (Bauman, 2020a: 111).

Bauman calls the second modernity 'liquid modernity'. According to him, in its first period, modernity did not eliminate the institutions that shaped individual lives, but also created new institutions such as business, bureaucracy, and social classes. The new era abolished old institutions and made individuals more independent. Bauman uses the metaphor of liquidity based on the fact that, unlike solids, liquids cannot maintain their shape against external pressures due to the weak bonds between their particles. The most characteristic feature of liquid modernity is the loosely interconnected coexistence of people. Since interpersonal social ties are makeshift and fragile, they are easily affected by changes. This prevents them from making long-term plans that require engagement. Love and affection relationships are also changing towards the fluidity of life. On the one hand, in an unstable world, people need a solid/honorable/sacrificing relationship more than before, and on the other hand, they are afraid of unconditional engagement (Bilgin, 2007:53).

Unable to slow down the mind-blowing pace of change, let alone control its direction, we focus on what we can influence, what we believe we can influence, and what we are certain of. We try to calculate and minimize the risk that we, or those we love, who are close to us at that moment, will fall victim to the incalculable and indescribable dangers that this ambiguous world and the uncertain future hide (Bauman, 2020b: 92). However, in a fluid, fast-moving and unpredictable order, we need permanent and reliable friendships and mutual trust more than ever. After all, friends are people whose understanding we can trust and who will lend us a helping hand when we stumble and fall. As a matter of fact, in the world we live in, even the fastest surfers and the most active skateboarders are not immune from this possibility. But on the other hand, fluid and fast-flowing orders offer privileges to people who can travel at the speed of light. If changing conditions require quick action and starting from scratch, long-term commitments and difficult-to-dissolve ties can turn into burdens that are difficult to bear. They can become bile that needs to be expelled. So there is no such thing as a good choice. You can't say "I want my cake to stay and my stomach is full" at the same time. However, in this order in which we try

to shape your life, this is exactly what we are forced to do. Whatever choice we make, we will be in trouble (Bauman, 2020b: 141). As time progresses and from one period of life to another, friendships may end.

### III. CONCLUSION

Rapid changes and transformations bring uncertainty and make insecurity more noticeable. This age, whose source can be explained as the abundance of rules, is the age in which ambiguity is felt strongly (Bauman, 2011: 33). A fluid society is one in which its members change their behavior rapidly before they even have the opportunity to develop habits and routines. In a fluid modern society, individual achievements cannot solidify into permanent assets because assets soon turn into liabilities and skills turn into obstacles. Drawing on past events to predict future trends becomes increasingly risky and misleading every day. While making reliable calculations becomes increasingly difficult, making error-free diagnoses becomes even more unimaginable. Because most, if not all, of the variables in the equations are unknown, it is impossible to have complete confidence in predictions of future trends. In short, fluid life is an unstable, risky life lived under constantly uncertain conditions (Bauman, 2018: 7-8). In today's world where everything is speed-based, it does not seem possible to escape from fluidity; everything from social structures to human relations, from business life to time and space is affected by fluidity.

There are not many friendships in today's fluid world. Moreover, their numbers decrease over time; There are rarely new ones and they are hard to find, because friendship is a fruit that requires a long ripening period. The longest-lasting friendships usually begin in our youth, when we still open up to people with unflinching trust. Distrust comes next to convince us that true friendship must pass the test of eternity. We are all a mass of particles that collapsed like meteors, colliding with each other and not connecting to each other; extinguished hopes and dreams, faded desires, wasted feelings, lies pretending to be truths, truths pretending to be lies: Each of them is even incapable of rotating around a common axis. In other words, even friendship seems problematic and unreliable (Bauman and Obirek, 2018: 182).

Even if individuals try to convince themselves that they love everyone and that everyone is good and trustworthy, this misconception not only leaves them disappointed and frustrated but also increases their general insecurity and fear (Horney, 2017: 40). On the other hand, the desire to have a solid relationship and to be free to break off the relationship at any time, to have a real, deep, permanent relationship, but a relationship that is suitable for review at any time, leaves people in the face of a dilemma (Bilgin, 2007: 53-54).

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