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Fundamentals and Effects of Knowledge Gap Theory on Human Society

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ABSTRACT

SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES: Knowledge gap theory is one of the theories related to the sphere of influence of mass media. The design of the knowledge gap theory initially included a simple relationship between the socio-economic status of individuals and the extent of the awareness gap between different groups. This means that the lower the socio-economic status of individuals, the less access they have to information, and vice versa; but later, it was not only the socio-economic base that determined people's access to information, but also their level of awareness of important issues related to social groups can be influenced by other variables such as people's interest or need for information.

METHOD AND FINDING: A descriptive-analytical study of this issue shows that the gap knowledge theory does not mean the lower class is unaware of the available data and information, but claims that the growth of knowledge is relatively higher among high-ranking groups, and this information gap It will get deeper and deeper day by day.

CONCLUSION: The basis of this theory is that the mass communication strengthens or increases the existing information inequalities. This research seeks to answer the question of what the theory of knowledge gap is and how its effects can be influenced by information inequalities.

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Introduction

Gap theory proves that new information spread by the media in a social system leads to information imbalance and equality among people. Especially when not all groups of people are exposed to information through mass media. Awareness gaps do not always occur.

Analyses performed by researchers show that at certain times, these distances do not necessarily increase, but on the other hand, the planning of some events through discussions, conversations, lectures, direct communication, reduces The distances and the closer of the people, as well as the level of information of the groups become equal and the gap of awareness is reduced.

This study seeks to examine the effects of the gap in consciousness by explaining the theory of the gap of consciousness and its principles.

The Concept of Knowledge Gap Theory (KGT)

As the decline of mass media information into the social system increases, sections of the population with a higher socioeconomic status acquire this information faster than sections with a lower base; As the difference or gap in awareness between these sections increases. This phenomenon is called the knowledge gap hypothesis.

(Surin and Tancard, 2007: 363)

Knowledge gap theory is one of the theories in the field of communication and media. This hypothesis was first developed by Tickenor, Donho, and first in 1970. Their main hypothesis was that:

As the dissemination of information by the mass media in a social system increases,

sections of the population with a higher socioeconomic status tend to obtain information faster than sections with a lower base.

Hence, the gap in awareness between the two is widening rather than narrowing.

The theory of the gap of consciousness is based on the idea that the media increase the information distance between different classes of people day by day. Because the way they communicate with the media is different and how they have access to the media and how they use information is also one of the factors in this gap. As information flows through the mass media in a society, the part of the people who have better economic conditions get more and faster access than the part of the people who have the most poor living conditions.

Therefore, the gap in the level of awareness between different groups of people, more than what is reduced by the media, increases the gaps between their awareness.

Also, the application of the knowledge gap theory in interactive media such as the Internet means that people with higher education use these mass media such as the Internet for purposes of more awareness and services; People with less education, on the other hand, use it significantly for entertainment.

Fundamentals of Gap Theory of Knowledge

Some of the most important foundations of the gap knowledge theory are:

1. Compatibility of the nature of the mass media system with people who are in a higher economic and social base.

2. Better social communication in people with higher social and economic status.
3. People have different levels of prior knowledge.

Differences in the pattern of media use; People with higher social status tend to use media such as print media because they have more information. While the lower class uses these media less. *(Surin and Tancard, 2007: 367)*

4. The ability of people to communicate, meaning that people with a high socioeconomic status are different from people at a lower level.
5. The mechanism of selective, accepting exposure, meaning that people with lower socioeconomic status may not be interested in some information or consistent with their values and

attitudes, so they may not expose themselves to it, accept it, or retain it.

6. There is a greater awareness gap in areas of public interest, such as public information; but it is less likely to occur in certain areas such as horticulture. The gap is also likely to narrow on issues that have an immediate and strong impact; But the probability of widening the gap in societies that have multiple sources of information is higher than other societies. *(Ibid: 364-373)*
7. Awareness gap in public distribution, ie the collection of information between different classes of society; And special

distributions, about which some are more knowledgeable than others. In a particular distribution, there are many possibilities for creating and filling gaps, and the media can fill gaps and create others. (*McQuail, 2006: 390*)

Different Models of Knowledge Gap Theory

Then, with the expansion of views on this theory, a total of three types of models have been proposed to explain the theory of the gap of consciousness:

Education: Education has a strong correlation with the use of media, which is an active, enthusiastic, information-oriented approach.

Motivation: In such a way that these individual factors moderate and partially compensate for the effect of

educational differences on media use.

The simultaneous impact of education and motivation: in order to influence and practice on knowledge. (*Ibid: 389*)

Theorists of this theory believe that the increase of knowledge and information in society is not done uniformly by members of society. That is, a group of people who are above the economic classes have better ability and conditions to acquire knowledge and information. So the people of the society are divided into two groups:

- The first group, whose members are educated people in the community, they have a lot of knowledge and information and can comment on anything.

- The second group, who have less knowledge and literacy and their knowledge about the issues around them is low. (*Razaghi, 2002: 164*)

Efforts to improve people's lives through mass media have not only not always been effective, but the media itself sometimes widens differences and distances between members of society. Groups with lower economic status, defined and classified by their level of literacy, and less knowledge of their public and social issues, do not have constant contact with the news and important events of the day, and are often unaware of their ignorance. In fact, the issue of awareness gap will increase the distance between the people of a society who are in the upper and lower

classes- or the first and second groups. (*Zareian, 1996: 43*)

The Impact of Knowledge Gap Theory on Society

In today's world, which is surrounded on all sides by different media, and in a situation where the propaganda system uses mass media as leverage to influence the audience more, more awareness can lead to a broader understanding of the social, political or economic environment. Be.

On the other hand, the lack of economic justice among different social groups creates a deep gap in awareness, and this gap determines the success of individuals in their individual and social lives, that is, as the economic situation of a group of society increases, The possibility of having information and benefiting from the media that distribute

information will also increase. This issue was first raised in a theory called “consciousness gap”. (Mohseni, 2000, 57).

This theory holds that as the dissemination of information in society by the mass media, sectors with higher socioeconomic status acquire this information faster than sectors with lower socioeconomic status. Thus the awareness gap between the two sectors increases rather than decreases; Later, by correcting this theory, the gaps created due to communication also included the attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

Also, this gap is not limited to people with high or low socio-economic status, but important gaps will occur between new and old generations. (*Bahramian, 2009: 76*)

Today, many people can be found in society who,

despite having degrees and having a better economic situation, benefit from and are affected by the messages of the mass media compared to other social classes, like other social groups. (*Mehdizadeh, 2010: 23*)

In this regard, the position of media influence in creating awareness gap It is important to note that in information inequality, the media is not the main element. Of course, the media can help and accelerate the distribution of information among sections of society who did not have access to information before the spread of the media, but the main issue in the gap awareness theory is that in the discussion of equalizing people in terms of information and access to it, The key is the socio-economic status of

individuals. Even if we can increase the speed of information dissemination and reduce the cost of access, the socio-economic status of individuals is an obstacle to equality. (*Surin and Tancard, 2007: 43*)

Conclusion

The research results and findings of the present study are:

The theory of awareness gap was a simple relationship between the socio-economic status of individuals and the degree of awareness gap between different groups, that is, it was thought that the lower the socio-economic status of individuals, the less access to information and vice versa.

Socio-economic status not only determines people's access to information, but also the level of people's awareness of important issues and issues

related to social groups can be influenced by other variables, such as interest (individual or social) or people's need for information.

Today, the generation gap in the generation gap is defined as a difference in the attitude or behavior of young people and the elderly, which causes a lack of mutual understanding between them and the distance between generations, and sometimes the new generation revolts against the old generation. Generational authority will depend on the efficiency and usefulness of knowledge and information, the values and norms of generations, and thus create a kind of gap.

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