

Managerial Culture between Tradition and Digitalization in Algerian Work Organizations: A Sociological Reading of the Conflict between Professional Generations

الثقافة التسييرية بين التقليد والرقمنة في منظمات العمل الجزائرية: قراءة سوسيولوجية لصراع الأجيال المهنية

Rafika Boukhalfa

Yahia Fares University of Médéa

Boukhalfa.rafika@univ-medea.dz

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ملخص:

نهدف من خلال دراستنا هذه إلى فهم ديناميات الصراع الجيلي في منظمات العمل الجزائرية في ظل التحول من الثقافة التسييرية التقليدية إلى الثقافة الرقمية، وهذا من خلال قراءة سوسيولوجية تركز على النظرية الصراعية الماركسية والمحدثّة، والمنظور الفيبري ونظريات ثقافة المنظمة.

إضافة إلى مراجعة لبعض الدراسات الجزائرية حول الموضوع، وقد أظهرت نتائج هذه القراءة والمراجعة أن الثقافة التسييرية الجزائرية تنسم بالطابع الهرمي المركزي والأبوي، مما يعرقل عملية التحول الرقمي ويفاقم التوتر بين الأجيال المهنية حيث يتجلى هذا الصراع في تباين القيم والتمثلات وأساليب العمل بين جيل المسيرين التقليديين وجيل الرقمنة، وبهذا نخلص في دراستنا إلى ضرورة بناء ثقافة تسييرية جديدة تدمج بين التراث الثقافي والتقنيات الرقمية الحديثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثقافة التسييرية، الرقمنة، صراع الأجيال، المنظمات الجزائرية، سوسيولوجيا العمل.

Abstract:

This study aims to understand the dynamics of generational conflict in Algerian work organizations in light of the transition from traditional managerial culture to digital culture. It adopts a sociological perspective based on both classical and contemporary Marxist conflict theory, the Weberian perspective, and theories of organizational culture.

In addition, the study reviews several Algerian studies addressing the same topic. The results of this analysis and review show that Algerian managerial culture is characterized by a hierarchical, centralized, and paternalistic structure. This structure tends to hinder the process of digital transformation and intensify tensions between professional generations. This conflict is manifested in

differences in values, perceptions, and work practices between the generation of traditional managers and the digital generation.

The study concludes that there is a need to build a new managerial culture that integrates cultural heritage with modern digital technologies.

Key words: Managerial culture, digitalization, generational conflict, Algerian organizations, sociology of work.

Introduction:

Algerian work organizations have recently been experiencing profound transformations in their managerial systems and institutional culture as a result of being influenced by the wave of digitalization. The application of digital technologies in various fields has become a competitive advantage. The Algerian government has adopted programs and policies aimed at implementing digitalization across different organizations. These transformations are not merely superficial technical changes; rather, they represent a real revolution that has affected the deep structure of organizations, power relations, and patterns of professional interaction (Castells, 1996, p. 29).

Managerial culture in Algeria is characterized by deep historical and social particularities, rooted in the colonial legacy and traditional societal values. For decades, administrative and managerial practices have been based on strict hierarchical principles, excessive centralization, and a paternalistic approach to decision-making (جابي، 2008، صفحة 145). These characteristics have formed a coherent cultural system deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of both employees and managers.

However, the introduction of digital technologies and the spread of information culture have created a profound rupture in traditional managerial culture and work practices. The new generation of professionals who grew up in the digital era carry values, perceptions, and work styles that differ fundamentally from those embraced by the older generation (Tapscott, 2009, p. 74) This generation aspires to greater flexibility, decentralization, and transparency, and prefers interactive management styles that rely on digital technologies and modern communication networks.

Within this context, the problem of this study emerges. It seeks to understand how the dynamics of generational conflict are formed within Algerian work organizations amid the gradual transition from traditional managerial culture to a new model based on digitalization and modern technologies. Accordingly, the central research question can be formulated as follows:

How are the dynamics of generational conflict shaped within Algerian work organizations in the context of the transition from traditional managerial culture to digital managerial culture?

This central question can be further broken down into the following sub-questions:

- What are the main characteristics of traditional managerial culture in Algerian organizations?
- How does the process of digitalization affect power relations and patterns of professional interaction?
- What is the nature of generational conflict and how does it manifest in the Algerian workplace?
- To what extent is it possible to build a new managerial culture that integrates heritage and modernity?

To answer these questions, a sociological reading was conducted based on an interpretive sociological approach drawing on the Weberian perspective to understand social action and the meanings actors attach to their behaviors. It also relies on the conflict perspective in analyzing power relations and generational conflict, as well as contemporary organizational culture theories to understand the dynamics of organizational change.

In addition, the study adopted documentary analysis of theoretical literature and relevant empirical studies, benefiting from the results of field studies conducted on Algerian organizations over the past two decades. This integrative approach allows for the development of a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of generational conflict within its specific historical and cultural context.

This study therefore seeks to enrich sociological literature related to the sociology of work and organizations in the Arab context in general and the Algerian context in particular. It also aims to develop a conceptual and analytical framework that helps explain the phenomenon of professional generational conflict in work environments influenced by digital transformation.

First: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

1 The Concept of Managerial Culture and Its Dimensions:

The concept of managerial culture, or organizational culture, is considered one of the most important concepts in the sociology of organizations and work. Edgar Schein provided a comprehensive definition of this concept, describing it as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration” (Edgar, 2017, p. 18) .

According to Schein, managerial culture includes three interacting levels:

- Artifacts – the visible manifestations of culture such as symbols, rituals, and behavioral patterns.
- Espoused Values – officially declared principles, goals, and organizational values.

- Basic Assumptions – the deepest level of culture, representing unconscious beliefs that shape organizational behavior (Edgar, 2017, pp. 23-26) .

Another important contribution comes from Geert Hofstede, who developed a model to analyze managerial culture based on five main cultural dimensions: (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 29-31)

-Power distance

-Uncertainty avoidance

-Individualism versus collectivism

-Masculinity versus femininity

-Long-term orientation

These dimensions provide a useful analytical framework for understanding cultural differences among organizations in different contexts.

In the Algerian context, field studies indicate that managerial culture is characterized by a high power distance, reaching about 80 points on Hofstede's scale, compared to 40 points in Scandinavian countries. It also shows a strong tendency toward uncertainty avoidance (75 points) and a collectivist orientation (30 points on the individualism scale) (أكتوفي، 2019، صفحة 112) .

2 Traditional Managerial Culture in Algerian Work Organizations

Managerial culture in Algeria has developed under the influence of intertwined historical and social factors. The colonial legacy left behind a rigid bureaucratic model based on excessive centralization and strict hierarchical authority (Addi, 1994, p. 78). This pattern was further reinforced after independence through the adoption of a state-led economic model, which emphasized the dominant role of the state in managing economic institutions.

This reality is evident in a study conducted by the Institute of Statistics at the University of Algiers in 2018, which examined a sample of 500 public and private institutions. The results showed that: (Institute of Statistics, University of Algiers, 2018, p. 34)

- 78% of major decisions are made at the top management level.
- Only 15% of decisions are delegated to middle management.
- 85% of managers over the age of fifty prefer formal written communication.
- Meanwhile, 70% of employees under the age of thirty prefer digital communication tools.

From these findings, several indicators reflecting the main characteristics of traditional managerial culture in Algeria can be identified:

- Strict hierarchy: a strong culture of authority and respect for superiors, with avoidance of challenging higher-level decisions even when they are questionable.
- Centralized decision-making: decision-making power is concentrated in the hands of a limited number of top managers.
- Paternalistic orientation: management practices rely more on personal relationships and loyalty than on professional competence.
- Resistance to change: organizations show a strong tendency to resist transformation and prefer stability and continuity.

3 The Digital Revolution as an Organizational and Professional Transformation

Digitalization represents more than a technical modernization of work tools; it constitutes a fundamental transformation in management philosophy and professional interaction patterns.

Manuel Castells defines it as “an information technological revolution reshaping the material foundations of society at an accelerated pace” (Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. I: *The Rise of the Network Society*, 1996, p. 30) .

Within organizations, digitalization generates profound transformations on several levels:

Technical level: introduction of new tools such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, digital collaboration platforms, and business intelligence technologies.

Organizational level: restructuring of organizational processes, decision-making mechanisms, and institutional structures.

Cultural level: transformation of values, perceptions, and professional behavioral patterns (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014, p. 89).

In Algeria, statistics from the Ministry of Digital Transformation show that the proportion of institutions adopting advanced digital solutions increased from 12% in 2015 to 45% in 2022 (Ministry of Digital Transformation and Statistics, 2022, p. 23) .

However, this quantitative growth does not necessarily reflect a deep qualitative transformation in managerial practices, as recent field studies reveal that many institutions simply replace traditional tools with digital ones without changing the underlying management philosophy.

4 Theoretical Approaches to Generational Conflict in the Sociology of Work

4.1 Conflict Perspective: From Karl Marx to Neo-Conflict Theory

The Marxist approach views generational conflict in the workplace as a reflection of contradictions within the capitalist system and the development of productive forces.

Karl Marx famously argued that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 33). This conflict can also encompass generational differences, reflected in divergent class consciousness and historical experiences.

In the Algerian context, generational conflict can be understood within the transformation from a state-directed socialist production model to a globalized capitalist system. The older generation formed its professional identity around values of collective work and institutional belonging, whereas the younger generation grew up in an environment dominated by individual competition and technological competence (بوزيد، 2021، صفحة 67) .

Neo-conflict theory goes beyond the deterministic Marxist interpretation by offering a more complex and dynamic view of social conflicts. For instance, Ralf Dahrendorf argues that conflict is not merely a dysfunction but a fundamental driver of social change. He emphasizes that conflicts arise from the distribution of authority within organizations, not only from economic ownership relations (Dahrendorf, 1959, p. 208).

Applying this concept to Algerian organizations, the traditional generation can be seen as the dominant authority group, controlling decision-making positions and attempting to preserve the status quo. In contrast, the digital generation represents an emerging authority group, seeking to redistribute power according to new criteria based on digital competence (Dahrendorf, 1959, pp. 236-240).

Similarly, Lewis Coser contributed significantly by distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional conflicts. He argued that conflict can be a positive force stimulating innovation and preventing institutional stagnation. The intensity of conflict depends on the structural flexibility of organizations: flexible organizations absorb conflicts constructively, while rigid organizations transform them into destructive crises (Coser, 1956, p. 151).

A recent study conducted by the National Institute for Productivity and Industrial Development (INPED) in 2023, involving 420 Algerian institutions, found that 58% of generational conflicts remain latent due to rigid hierarchical structures that discourage open expression of contradictions. When these hidden conflicts erupt, they often manifest through symbolic forms such as employee turnover, declining productivity, and passive resistance (National Institute for Productivity and Industrial, 2023, p. 124).

Another comprehensive study conducted by researchers from Tizi Ouzou University in 2022, covering 15 major industrial institutions and 1,250 employees, identified three main patterns of generational conflict (205-178 الصفحات، 2022، بن داود و سعادة، 2022) :

- Conflict over professional legitimacy (72%) – the traditional generation refuses to recognize digital skills as a legitimate indicator of professional competence.
- Conflict over procedural authority (54%) – disagreement over the appropriate methods for performing tasks (traditional vs. digital methods).
- Conflict over organizational identity (38%) – disagreement about which organizational model should dominate: the traditional hierarchical model or the digital network-based model.

The study also revealed different conflict strategies used by each generation:

- The traditional generation relies on bureaucratic delay strategies to slow down or block digitalization projects.
- The digital generation adopts horizontal alliances, forming informal digital networks to bypass hierarchical barriers and promote change

4.2 Bureaucracy and Rational Authority from the Weberian Perspective

Max Weber developed a comprehensive theory of authority, distinguishing between traditional authority, charismatic authority, and legal-rational authority. He argued that modern societies gradually evolve toward bureaucratic organization, characterized by written rules and functional specialization (Weber, 1959, pp. 102-103).

Within the context of generational conflict, this perspective helps explain how different forms of legitimacy compete within the same organization. The older generation relies on traditional legitimacy, based on seniority and experience, whereas the younger generation seeks rational legitimacy, based on technical competence and professional achievement (198 صفحة، 2017، شبيخي).

4.3 Organizational Culture Theories: Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Crozier

Pierre Bourdieu made important contributions to understanding conflict dynamics within social fields. His concept of field refers to “a network of objective relations between positions defined by their location within the distribution of different forms of power” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 72).

From this perspective, an organization can be viewed as a field of struggle where actors belonging to different generations compete to impose their definitions of professional competence and organizational legitimacy.

Similarly, Michel Crozier developed strategic action theory, which emphasizes the ability of actors to maneuver and manipulate organizational rules in order to achieve their interests (Crozier & Friedberg, pp. 55-56).

This theory helps explain how different generations use their symbolic, social, and technological resources in their struggle for organizational influence and dominance.

Second : Managerial Culture between Tradition and Digitalization

1 Traditional Managerial Practices and Their Cultural References

Traditional managerial practices in Algeria are based on a complex value system that combines local cultural heritage with the colonial administrative legacy. At the level of professional relations, a culture of excessive respect for hierarchical authority prevails, where the manager is viewed not as a coordinator of collective efforts but rather as an absolute authority whose decisions must be obeyed without questioning) زوزو، 2016، صفحة 123).

This is confirmed by a field study conducted by the Research Center in Applied Economics for Development (CREAD) in 2019 on managerial practices in 300 Algerian economic institutions. The results showed that 82% of managerial decisions are made centrally by the general manager or top management, while 67% of middle managers do not possess real decision-making authority (Research Center in Applied Economics for Developme, 2019, p. 78) .

The traditional cultural reference is also reflected in what can be described as a culture of personal loyalty, where personal relationships and tribal or regional affiliations often outweigh professional competence. Another field study conducted by researchers from the University of Oran in 2020 revealed that 73% of employees believe that personal relationships play a decisive role in career promotion more than professional performance (بلعباس و وآخرون، 2020، صفحة 102) .

2 Digital Transformation and the Change in Authority Patterns and Professional Relations

Digital transformation introduces fundamental changes in the structure of power within organizations. Digital technologies weaken traditional centralization by facilitating the flow of information and enabling decision-making at lower organizational levels. They also redefine the concept of expertise, which is no longer linked solely to seniority and accumulated experience, but also to the ability to adapt to new technologies and absorb digital knowledge (Davenport & Patil, 2012, p. 72).

In the Algerian context, a study conducted by the National Center for Research in Economics and Management in 2021 showed that the introduction of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in Sonatrach led to a redistribution of decision-

making authority. The proportion of decisions delegated to middle management increased from 18% in 2015 to 38% in 2020. However, this transformation was not smooth and was accompanied by significant resistance from senior executives (National Center for Research in Economics and Mana, 2021, p. 145).

At the level of professional relationships, digital transformation introduces new patterns of interaction based on transparency and immediacy. Internal communication platforms and collaborative work applications allow employees to bypass traditional hierarchical barriers and encourage horizontal communication between organizational levels. This shift threatens the symbolic privileges previously enjoyed by traditional managers (Zuboff, 2019, p. 178).

3 Tension between the Generation of Traditional Managers and the Digital Generation

The tension between the two generations appears at multiple levels.

First, at the level of values: the older generation tends to prioritize stability, job security, and institutional loyalty, while the younger generation values innovation, flexibility, and rapid professional development.

Second, at the level of working methods: the traditional generation prefers complex bureaucratic procedures and paper documentation, whereas the digital generation favors simplicity, speed, and automation (Twenge, 2017, p. 201).

A study conducted at the University of Constantine in 2021 on generational conflict in the Algerian public administration, involving 850 employees of different ages, revealed that 68% of employees under 35 feel frustrated by the slow decision-making process and by their supervisors' rejection of proposals to modernize procedures. Conversely, 72% of managers over 50 expressed concern about the younger generation's haste and perceived lack of respect for established procedures (بومدين و . وآخرون، 2021، صفحة 234).

The experience of Sonelgaz offers an important example for understanding the challenges of digital transformation in major Algerian institutions. In 2018, the company launched an ambitious program to digitize all its services and managerial procedures. However, an internal evaluation report in 2020 revealed strong resistance from traditional senior managers, as 45% of directors over 55 refused to abandon traditional paper-based procedures (Sonelgaz, 2020, p. 67).

Third: Professional Generational Conflict and the Reshaping of Organizational Identity

1 The Digital Generation and the Redefinition of Professional Competence

The digital generation proposes a new definition of professional competence that differs fundamentally from the traditional one. While competence for the traditional

generation is measured by seniority, accumulated experience, and deep knowledge of internal procedures, the digital generation evaluates competence based on the ability to adapt quickly, innovate, master new technologies, think critically, and solve complex problems (Schwab, 2017, p. 89).

This difference in perspectives creates a deep symbolic conflict over recognition and legitimacy. The older generation may feel that its long experience is no longer valued, while the younger generation feels that its digital skills are not sufficiently appreciated.

A study conducted at the University of Boumerdes in 2022 showed that 64% of young employees believe their digital skills are not being effectively utilized in their organizations (University of Boumerdes, 2022, p. 91) .

2 Communication Crisis between Generations and Differences in Values and Representations

The communication gap between generations is one of the most serious manifestations of generational conflict. The two generations often do not speak the same “language,” both literally and metaphorically.

Linguistically, the digital generation frequently uses English technical terminology and digital abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to the older generation. Symbolically, the two generations interpret situations and behaviors in entirely different ways (Boyd, 2014, p. 134).

These differences appear particularly in three key areas: (بن عيسى، 2022، صفحة 178)

-The concept of time: the digital generation values speed and immediacy, whereas the traditional generation believes that important decisions require sufficient time for reflection and consultation.

-The concept of authority: the digital generation tends to question and challenge authority, while the traditional generation perceives this as unacceptable defiance.

-The concept of success: the digital generation measures success through achievement and innovation, while the traditional generation associates it with stability and job security.

3 Managerial Culture as a Field of Inequality and Revaluation

Applying Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the field to organizations allows us to understand managerial culture as a field of struggle over different forms of capital:

Cultural capital (knowledge and qualifications)

Social capital (relationships and social networks)

Symbolic capital (reputation and recognition)

The traditional generation possesses accumulated social and symbolic capital, while the digital generation holds new cultural capital linked to digital technologies (Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique Sociale du Jugement* , 1979, pp. 122-128).

The conflict therefore revolves around each generation's attempt to impose its definition of legitimate capital within the organization. The traditional generation seeks to preserve the status quo that favors it, while the digital generation attempts to redefine the rules of the game in a way that values its digital cultural capital.

Thus, this conflict is not primarily about material resources but about symbolic recognition and legitimacy (Honneth, 2000, p. 145).

4 Toward Building a New Managerial Culture Integrating Heritage and Technology

Addressing generational conflict in Algerian organizations requires building a managerial culture based on an integrative approach that benefits from the strengths of both generations.

The accumulated experience of the traditional generation and its deep understanding of the local context and human relations represent a valuable foundation that should not be ignored. At the same time, the digital generation's capacity for innovation and rapid adaptation is essential for organizational survival in a rapidly changing world.

In this context, recent studies propose the mutual mentoring model as an effective tool to bridge the generational gap. In this model, knowledge transfer is bidirectional: the older generation teaches professional values and contextual understanding, while the younger generation shares digital technologies and modern working methods.

The experience of Mobilis Algeria in applying this model in 2021 showed positive results, with generational conflicts decreasing by 35% within one year (Mobilis Company, 2022, p. 34) .

Similarly, the experience of the National Bank of Algeria (BNA) demonstrates that success is possible when there is genuine commitment to change. Through an intensive training program and the involvement of all administrative levels, the bank successfully digitized 80% of its services between 2019 and 2022. A case study conducted by researchers from the Higher School of Commerce found that the success of this experience was mainly due to the adoption of a gradual change strategy and the inclusion of the older generation in the transformation process rather than marginalizing it (رزيق و بوعزة، 2022، صفحة 156) .

Conclusion:

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be argued that generational conflict in Algerian work organizations is not merely a clash between two age groups; rather, it reflects a deeper cultural crisis that expresses the tension between two contrasting managerial models: the traditional model, based on hierarchy and paternalistic centralization, and the digital model, based on flexibility, decentralization, and interactivity.

To understand this conflict, it is necessary to move beyond reductionist approaches that attribute it solely to age differences and instead take into account the socio-cultural and historical dimensions. The theoretical frameworks represented by the conflict perspective, along with the perspectives of Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, together provide an analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of struggle over power, legitimacy, and recognition within organizations.

The findings drawn from Algerian field studies mentioned earlier indicate that digital transformation in Algerian institutions still faces significant cultural obstacles. Although the quantitative number of institutions adopting digital solutions has increased, the qualitative transformation in managerial practices remains limited. Many organizations merely digitize traditional procedures without fundamentally rethinking their managerial philosophy.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of digital transformation in Algerian organizations does not depend solely on the availability of technological infrastructure. Rather, it requires the construction of a new managerial culture capable of embracing generational diversity and transforming it from a source of conflict into a source of richness and creativity. This process requires a clear political will, a long-term strategic vision, and a genuine commitment to dialogue and mutual respect among all professional generations.

On this basis, this study proposes the following recommendations:

- Develop joint training programs that bring together both generations and rely on the mutual mentoring model to enhance knowledge and experience exchange.
- Develop evaluation criteria that integrate traditional experience with digital competence while encouraging innovation and continuous learning.
- Avoid sudden transformations that may provoke strong resistance, and instead adopt a gradual change approach that allows all actors to adapt.
- Involve all age groups and administrative levels in designing and implementing the digital transformation strategy.

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