Social Construction of Young Elites’ Understanding of Being Elite, Participants: Young Elite Members of Iran's National Elites Foundation

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Abstract

Elite are the main factor of every country's development and progress. As the other countries, in Iran also, they play the remarkable role in country’s development and advancement, so that different policies approved to protect them and various foundations, in particular National Elite Foundation, have established to prevent their migration. Nevertheless, the evidence reveals the fact that the foundations’ policy has not been effective and the rate of the elite migration has increased, nowadays. In this way, high economic, political and social costs are imposed upon this country. To study the mentioned problem, various quantitative researches have studied the reasons of their migration based on the attraction and repulsion factors of developed and under-developed countries. However, investigating the elites’ understanding and experience of commercial sphere has been ignored. Therefore, the present study, due to deprivation of concrete and qualitative research in this sphere, inclines to investigate the young elites’ understanding and experience of commercial realm. Consequently, Grounded Theory, as a qualitative method, has been used to interpret their understanding and experience of being the Elite. Achieving the goal, purposive and theoretical sampling and deep interview has been performed to collect the data. On the other hand, Open Coding, Axial Coding and Selective Coding are used to analyze the data. Entirely, research findings contain 335 concepts, 30 initial categories, 6 main categories and one core category. As a whole, young elites’ understanding of being the Elite get along with responsibility and in this process their performance has been oriented responsibility one. However, in contrast with their oriented responsibility performance, they have achieved disappointing experiences.

Keywords: the young Elites, grounded theory, paradigmatic model, micro theory.
Introduction

Human Bing "observes" and compare during the time. Observing and comparing are providing the opportunity in which the Human Bing appraise his/her performances and imagine the better situation for himself/herself. Observing and comparing separate the Human Bing of the present time and ordinariness and, on the other hand, motivate him to departure from his community and migrate to other country mentally or physically. During this process, the systematic observing and comparing make it possible to achieve science and scientific community; the community which seemed extremely different from his own society and finally result in advancement and development of civilizations. Famous person as Ebne Sina, Karl Marx, Tolstoy, Abureyhan, Freud, Newton, Galileo Galilei and etc. are the Elite who have had remarkable effects on science, culture, community and politic. The Elites, who proved this theory that skilled human capital (scientifically, culturally, politically and ...) are the main factor of multidimensional development, advancement, constancy and immunity of every society (Hatami and et al, 1391:56).

Regarding the above mentioned theory, result in this question that why the young Elite of undeveloped and under-developed countries do not take a great and effective role in their country’s development? The answer of this question relates to the power of observing and comparing. The young Elites and skilled forces of these countries that has been trained by western scientific, cultural and social values, understand their growth context with observing and comparing. They simply observe and compare the attraction and repulsion factors and imagine the better situation for themselves. Human capital fight or brain drains are the concepts which the science of economic and sociology use to describe this process. The two dimensional process which bring advantages for one side and disadvantages for another side. Statics explain the fact that this process needs more study in Iran. Every year about 150 to 180 thousands educated Iranian migrate. Iran, also, has achieved the first grade in brain drain in recent years. These statics mean that 150 billion dollar waste every year in Iran (Faraji Dana, 2013).

Definitely, such a complicated situation, in one hand, makes core countries more powerful and in the other hand, makes peripheral countries feeble. Consequently, scholars and policymakers focused to recognize the approach of escaping from this unequal exchange. Being successful in this goal, various foundations have been stablished and different regulations have been written to prevent the young Elites from migration. Among these programs, the most important one is the establishment of National Elite Foundation. Undoubtedly, none of the above mentioned approaches could solve the problem. In this way the present research, at first, investigate the process of being Elite and then study the effect of National Elite Foundation in protecting the Elite. To do so, this research concentrates on answer of these questions: how do the young elite think about the National Elite Foundation? How do they recognize themselves? Do they believe in themselves as young elite? How is their understanding of being Elite? How is their strategy of being Elite? What have been the results of being Elite?
Conceptual framework

Considering quantitative and qualitative differences in terms of philosophy and paradigm points of view (Patton, 2001), quantitative studies employ a conceptual framework versus theoretical framework in quantitative research methods. Conceptual framework encloses concepts forming the core focus of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007, Patten, 2001, Neuman, 2006). Accordingly, interpretive approach confronts social positivism approach aiming at exploring the rules of social life. The interpretive approach emphasizing “circumstances” assumes that based on different conditions, men construct varying meanings and so it should be avoided to recognize a generalized and holistic pattern of their actions. Unlaw, in terms of current circumstances and exclusive life experiences and situations we shall interpret their actions (Patton, 2001, Neuman, 2007). But, how is it possible to achieve a scientific understanding with this approach?

In interpretive approach the purpose is to understand humans’ interactions meaning. In this sense, knowledge is traceable in man’s everyday actions. In this view, knowledge is nothing beyond human interactions. Thus, folk knowledge is the main source of qualitative studies and so scientific methodologies must be applicable as a result of this, knowledge is not to be a product of scientists or elites, and rather, knowledge is instantly produced and reproduced by the public. Therefore, subject and object of understanding are the same and investigator acts either as a researcher or as a researched (Creswell, 2007, Turner, 2003, Ritzer, 2004). Taking these points together, the present research is an attempt to investigate Iranian elites’ understanding, sponsored by the National Elite Foundation, from the process of changing into elite.

Method

The current study used an interpretive paradigm (selected from positivism, critical and interpretive paradigms). Thus, a quantitative research method was applied. According to the research questions and purposes, the quantitative research method adopted the ground theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in a book titling the same as “the Discovery of Ground Theory”. This research method is important because in one hand it assists theory making and on the other hand it leads to an instrument for analyzing qualitative data. Indeed, this method is seeking for higher portion of description, as well as production or exploration of the theory. The ground theory investigators ask for developing the theory through studying subjects who are involved in a mutual interaction.

The devised theory in this method is not imposed on the research externally, but it is a product of data obtained from participants who experience a process. In this way, two main approaches could be discussed as: objectivist approach of Strauss and Corbin (2011) and constructivist approach of Charmaz (Iman, 2012). In the present study the investigator employed the former approach.

For sampling procedure, purposive and chain sampling methods were applied. The participants consisted of students participated in school and university Olympiads, top national students and top graduates, national and international inventors, experienced and active elites, and new coming elites of different majors. Moreover, the process of data
collection used deep and semi deep interview techniques and continued up to the point that the investigator achieved a theoretical saturation on the basis of theoretical sampling. To this end, 11 participants were interviewed. Totally, the interviews took a minimum of 56:24 minutes and a maximum of 228:78 minutes; i.e. over 1000 minutes.

Each interview lasted 97 minutes in average. Then, the interviews recorded were converted into texts. It needs to be mentioned here that the process of data collection proceeded along with data analysis process. In the data analysis process, line-by-line analysis was used to do open coding. Along with expansion of concepts and categories, axial and selective coding methods were employed. Credibility of the data were confirmed through triangulation (researchers’ engagement in different process of the National Elite Foundation), prolong engagement in the study, member checking and reflexivity techniques. Experts affirmed the reliability via affirmation of multidimensional coding by different coders.

**Research findings**

This research intends to investigate the experience of being young Elite in elite’s point of view. During this process, the writer immerses in young Elite’s understanding of being elite. To do so, the author conduct an inquiry to explain the whole experience of Elite, from the first time they became familiar with National Elite Foundation to the location that they were called Elite; the identity which finally leads to their mental meaning of this label and has summarized in this core category. This process constructed of 6 main categories, 30 initial categories and 335 concepts.

**Core category:** Elite’s unbalanced understanding of being elite took place during the oriented responsibility actions that results in their disappointment.

The core category of this study is “the Elite’s unbalanced understanding of process of being elite in transition from oriented responsibility actions to disappointed experiences. This process reveals that elite, actually, act based on the oriented responsibility understanding, however, the result of their performance in society and National Elite Foundation cause them to be disappointed.

**Paradigmatic model:** oriented responsibility understanding of being Elite (being Elite means accountability).

Research Paradigmatic model discloses the processes which have taken place during the study. This model contains 5 parts; contextual conditions, casual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies and consequences. Core phenomenon also is in the middle of the model which other activities have formed around it. The flow of process reveals that the core phenomenon refers to the same meaning of accountability and being Elite, it means that the participants’ understanding of being Elite is equal with their oriented responsibility understanding. That is, they understood being Elite as being oriented responsibility; thus, they have acted based on this understanding.
Paradigmatic model No. 1: oriented responsibility understanding of being Elite

**Casual conditions**

Casual conditions which cause this kind of understanding contain the following: 1- Active participation in social networks, 2- High ownerships of social and cultural capital, 3- Achieving honor in Festivals, Olympic and etc., 4- Having regulation conditions.

**Intervening conditions**

1- accessing to minimum facilities, 2- participation in decision making, 3- Achieving primary needs, 4- Using facilities, 5- Participation in Foundation programs, 6- Country’s elite training main policies, 7- Comparing with Western elites and domestic success.

**Core phenomenon**

Oriented responsibility understanding of being Elite

**Contextual conditions**

1- special social and personality characteristics, 2- Elite’s high motivation, creativity, perseverance and so on, 3- High level of loyalty, 4- Elite’s high level of interest.

**Strategies**

1- Scientific production, 2- Producing the intellectual content, 3- Elitist activity, 4- Moral life, 5- Moral life style, 6- Knowledgeable economic activity, 7- Trends and public works, 8- Charitable contributions, 9- Sacrificial and selfless thinking, 10- Pay attention to society, 11- Peaceful social / cultural activities

**Consequences**

1- Missed opportunities, 2- Complicated life, 3- Cognitive dissonance between expectations and realities, 4- Traumatic life, 5- Continuous blaming, 6- Limited freedom in society, 7- Troublesome, 8- Continuous not protecting, 9- Repeated problems, 10- Successive defeats, 11- Dissatisfaction of self, 12- Dissatisfaction of Foundation, 13- Secluded elite, 14- Rejected foundation

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Casual conditions

Casual conditions which cause this kind of understanding contain the following: 1- Active participation in social networks, 2- High ownership of social and cultural capital, 3- Achieving honor in Festivals, Olympic and..., 4- Having regulation conditions.
Most of the Elite have participated in social networks actively. In reality, they have been, formally or informally, member of various networks which their activity refers to developmental and elite activities. For example, most of them have participated in different social groups as an active member. On the other hand, they have educated in a schools that traditionally provide the basis of especial social networks. They knew the other elite too, because other elite joined to their network by the old elite members. For example, Hosein talks about his social networks: “In our childhood, we made a group among ourselves! Its name was Noavarane Mouood. Yeah! This Noavarane Mouood took form, step by step. Our other friends joined us. now we are about 15 and all of us are the member of Foundation”.

Besides the above mentioned point, research participants often possess high social and cultural capitals. Their familiarity and social relations, the number of friendship circles, especial kind of friendship circles, social and family relationship, the education of parents, elite’s education, possessing extended relations in school, university and society have been caused their participation in elite networks and took part in different national and international competitions. Participating in Kharazmi Festival, student national and international Olympic, patent, being ideal student in the country and …. are the remarkable type of different competition. Achieving the best position and success, motivates them to attempt more and also create more responsibility among them. On the other hand, their success in this festivals and matches leded them in participating in new social networks and achieve especial identity. This fact, itself, results in their advancement of oriented responsibility.

As mentioned before, elite’s success in different competitions lead to their participation, activity and consuming Elite National Foundation’s facilities, that is they could access to regulation ‘s conditions and opportunities. This process - access to regulation ‘s conditions and opportunities- and labeling formally as Elite in Elite National Foundation, is the main part of oriented responsibility understanding. Actually, being under the protection of Foundation, continuous activity in Foundation and society and Foundation propaganda of Elite and their effective role in countries development result in the sameness of elite understanding and self and social responsibility.to achieve this goal, Elite focus on different strategies which has been cited in the following paragraph:

**Contextual conditions**

Contextual conditions are: 1-especial social and personal characteristics, 2- Elite ‘s high motivation, creativity, perseverance and so on, 3- High level of conscientiousness, 4-Elite ‘s high level of interest.

Contextual conditions refer to context that strategies have been arisen in it. Indeed, these conditions are especial conditions that relates to participants’ strategies. This particular context is nothing except the especial characteristics which is higher in elite than common people. It means Elite own more hope, motivation, creativity, perseverance, intention of development and advancement and etc. Actually, they feature the certain social and personal traits that differentiate them from other people and they tend more for development and advancement. This matter and their sense of responsibility and conscientiousness make them sensitive about country. On the other hand, their eagerness, which is partly because of their
age and success, motivate them for more effort. Setareh describes these characteristics as: “I know that guys tries to be one of the Foundation’s almost the groups that I’m the member, those who win in Olympic, guys of Kharazmi Festival, invention guys, ideal university students, these are the ones that I sense deeply, they really try. I wish a person analyze time here, that how time is used among them. Once we calculate, me and my friend, we work about 10 hours a day. Something that is the dream for many of Iranian”.

**Intervening conditions**

Intervening conditions contain the following: 1-accessing to minimum facilities, 2-participation in decision making, 3-Achieving basic needs, 4- Using facilities, 5-Participation in Foundation programs, 6- Country’s elite training main policy, 7- Comparing with Western elites and domestic elite’s success.

Intervening conditions are more extended than contextual conditions, so that strategies occur in these conditions. Indeed, these conditions relates to macro-forces which affect participants’ strategies. In other word, despite the contextual conditions, they do not seem to be especial, otherwise, they are enough subjective to aggregate or diminish the core phenomenon. The factors that influence the participants’ strategies and aggregate or diminish the core phenomenon, at the first stage include basic action sources, accessing to minimum fund and active participation in Foundation’s program. Indeed, meeting the basic needs of elite direct them to more needs and self-actualization, the condition which aggregate the sense of accountability and oriented-responsibility understanding. On the other hand, participating in programs, decision making in micro fields and entering in working groups, directly or indirectly, reinforce the sense of Elite’s accountability. Pouya explain this sense: “I should be the sample, in newspaper, TV, radio, interview, everybody knows me. If not everybody, my friends and relatives know me as an Elite, there should be a difference, because I want to be a sample”.

In addition to these factors, the role of countries macro-policies and Foundation’s policies cannot be ignored as the main reason in reinforcing of the sense of Elite’s accountability. This macro-policies assign the minimum responsibilities and plant this thought that Elite are the most effective factors in countries’ development. This effort leads to the construction of accountability belief and the practical strategies among Elite. Beside the aforementioned matters, membership in social networks which is explained in casual conditions is remarkable reason. Membership in social networks provides this opportunity that Elite, constantly, compare themselves with other domestic successful elite and western elite. Continuous comparing, unexpectedly, reinforce the sense of accountability; because in this personal situation, they achieve outstanding advancement. Indeed, Elite’s efforts often represent in unprotected personal experiences in which Elite attain success without any protection. This fact presents that Elite compare themselves continuously with another elite and emphasis on their personal and oriented-responsibility attempts.

**Strategies**
Participants’ strategies against the core phenomenon and under the influence of intervening and contextual conditions are: 1- Scientific production, 2- Producing the intellectual content, 3- Elitist activity, 4- Moral life, 5- Moral life style, 6- Knowledge-based economic activity, 7- Trends and public work, 8- Charitable contributions, 9- Sacrificial and selfless thinking, 10- pay attention to society, 11- peaceful socio-cultural activities.

As it is obvious, Elite actions and strategies against the core phenomenon are community – based and developmental – oriented. Indeed, Elite’s strategies in their personal life are based on moral life and this emphasis on moral rules is effective in science production too. Otherwise, science and intellectual content production easily perceived in personal life, relation with friends and close circles. Their economic activities, also, are community – based and knowledge – based. It means, at first, Elite’s economic activity is knowledge – based and, second, it is effectual in countries progress and development. In addition to aforementioned factors, Elite’s dedication, efforts, cost and time consuming in socio – cultural programs should be applauded. Zahra describe this responsibility: “I began to obey many things, as an example, we teach here, in university, as a PhD student. So I tell myself you are the representative of Farsi faculty, care about it! For example, when you say you are the representative of Farsi faculty, how simple researchable moral topics or even in everyday life … And there is another thing, I mean; I don’t give myself any permission to make a mistake! I don’t let myself to make a mistake or do weak projects “.

**Consequences**

The strategies consequences contain: 1- Missed opportunities, 2-complicated life, 3- Cognitive dissonance between expectations and realities, 4- Traumatic life, 5- Continuous blaming, 6- Limited freedom in society, 7- Troublesome, 8- Continuous non- protection, 9- Repeated problems, 10- Successive defeats, 11- Dissatisfaction of self, 12- Dissatisfaction of Foundation, 13- Secluded elite, 14- Rejected Foundation, 15- Marginalized Elite.

Consequences are the results of strategies which actors adopt them in confronting with core phenomenon, contextual conditions and intervening conditions. the consequences can be expressed positive, negative or neutral. In the present study, positive strategies occur when oriented – responsibility understanding instructed. However, as explained before, in response to these strategies participants experience disappointed feelings. These are negative consequences. The wide spectrum of this consequences starts from dissatisfaction of self and continue to dissatisfaction of Foundation and secluded elite. During this way, Elite lost many opportunities as marriage …and at the same time they also suppressed by their family. Their freedom is limited and being Elite has changed to boundaries. Mehraneh explain this process: “I became disappointed from Foundation and continue my own way, my own programs, I thought Foundation facilitates my progress but when I understood that it is an institution as the others, I disappoint “.

**Discussion and results**

The present study investigated the construction of young elite’s understanding of being Elite process. The research has been focused on grounded theory and was conducted as a
qualitative research to interpret young Elites understands and experience of being the Elite. Achieving the goal, purposive and theoretical samplings and deep interviews have been performed to collect the data. On the other hand, Open Coding, Axial Coding and Selective Coding are used to analyze the data. Entirely, research findings contain 335 concepts, 30 initial categories, 6 main categories and one core category. Research paradigmatic model discloses the processes which have taken place during the study. This model contains 5 parts: contextual conditions, casual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies and consequences. As a result, the theoretical map and nonlinear concrete process presented theoretically in paradigm.

As it is presented in shape NO.1, the first two box at the left side, that is, young Elite’s high social and cultural capitals and active participation in social networks lead to self-respected which result in extension of Elite’s social and cultural capitals and elite network. In addition, these two are the main factors of membership in Foundation and accessing to Foundation’s regulation opportunities. On the other hand, achieving Foundation identity and Foundation’s regulation opportunities will cause self-respected, extension of elite network and progress in social and cultural capitals.

The combination of these processes, finally, leads to oriented-responsibility understanding of being elite. In addition to these process, the psychosocial characteristics which mentioned before are effective, too. That is especial psychosocial characteristics of elite directly affect oriented-responsibility subjectivity. Besides these two, minimum social, economic and political facilities direct Elite to responsibility, other-centrism and self-actualization. As a whole, oriented-responsibility subjectivity directs them to oriented-responsibility performance. This relation cause disappointing results that result in disappointment of Foundation. In this situation, most of the Elite select personal strategies which, regardless of Foundation’s protection, facilitate their personal success. On the other hand, disappointing in Foundation leads to suppression and consequently to disappointing performance and finally migration from country.

It should be mentioned circular returning from suppression, disappointing results and despair of Foundation to oriented-responsibility understanding, reveals the especial characteristic of Elite that is perseverance and attempt. This circular returning reflects positive and negative effects. It means that Elite repeat this process continuously and every time return to oriented-responsibility subjectivity and rethink about their goals, then examine another oriented-responsibility performance. It conveys that Elite never give up.

The most important point is that, the result of rethinking result in migration or concentrating on personal strategies without any protection. In this way their social productivity decrease and their energy cannot be managed for countries progress, otherwise, their energy wastes and changes to discontent. On the other hand, when Elite migrate to another country, their productivity transits, too, and high costs impose upon the country.
Indeed, Elite leave the country in a time that they can perform scientifically and economically thus, through their migration, Elite’s scientific and economic novel idea will perform out of the country and just high costs will remain for their own country.
Shape No. 1: The study schema: the process of elite’s understanding evolution of being Elite

- High social and cultural ownership
- Accessing regulation’s opportunities and Foundation identity
- Oriented – responsibility understanding of Elite’s identity
- Oriented – responsibility performance
- Disappointing results
- Disappointment of Foundation
- Suppression
- Personal strategies
- Personal knowledge based success
- Brain drain

- Self-respected
- Minimum social, cultural, economical facilities
- Especial Elite’s socio-cultural characteristic
References