

# Youth attitudes towards clerics in Iraq: Anthropological study

<sup>1</sup>Jameel Mohsin Mansoor

**Abstract:** *The study is an attempt to shed light on the attitudes of young people towards the clerics in Iraq after 2003, due to their important and direct impact on the political and social processes. After 2003, the environment has created a sort of inclinations and tendencies by individuals. Therefore, being acquainted with these inclinations has necessity to identify the acceptability of religious clerics among young people.*

**Keywords:** *young people, religious clerics, attitudes*

## **I. Introduction:**

The research aims to clarify the differences between the youth and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics according to the variables (age - education - living level). Also, it highlights the characteristics of cleric's rhetoric from the view of the youth. Nonetheless, the research problem focuses on the serious issue concerning a group of youth whose their social, political and religious lives affected by the cleric's ideas, opinions and attitudes. Putting it differently, the youth in community constitute a solid ground for clerics due to their ages, characterized by vitality and vigor, that makes them easily affected by the religious ideas and thoughts, issued by clerics. On this basis, the study arises from a major question: what are the youth attitudes towards the clerics in Iraq? This question diverges into sub-questions: What do we mean by clerics? What are their perceptions? Do the clerics affect young people in community?

## **II. Methodology, Concepts and Theoretical Approach:**

The research adopts the survey method and the sample method which depends on questionnaire to determine the difference between young people and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics. Furthermore, the collected data and information are interpreted and analyzed statistically.

The questionnaire consists of 12 basic questions. The nature of closed-open questions vary to be, questions of assessment scale, matrix questions, and other questions are managed due to their importance and priority. Moreover, the questionnaire contains basic (demographic) information of the respondents. In addition, another aspect of the question are related to their personal opinions regarding religious, political and social issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Art faculty, Wasit University, Iraq

The study population is conducted within a geographical distribution which includes (displaced people within Al-Amiriya camp). Using a sample consists of (200) young males, and the questionnaire is deliberately distributed to the displaced people who have been chosen by the researcher. Table (1) shows the distribution of the study sample according to three variable: the age, educational level and Living level.

**Table No. (1) Shows the distribution of the study sample due to the type of respondents**

percentage	frequency	Distribution of study sample due to ...	
25.5 %	51	18-21	ages
38.5%	77	22-25	
% 12	24	26-29	
% 24	48	30-35	
% 21	42	Low education	education
% 37	74	Intermediate education	
% 42	84	High education	
% 22	44	Not enough	Living status
43%	86	enough	
35%	70	More than enough	

The current research can give some definitions to the scientific concepts that have been adopted and employ them in the required way and scientific form as well as the most important concepts that have been discussed and reviewed in this research are:

Youth: Many specialists have discrepancy in the field of youth sociology to find a single definition concerning the concept of youth. Although, they have reached consensus that the youth stage constitutes a turning point towards formulating the personality of individual (Khazraji, 1989, p. 17). Some researchers identified that on the basis of the temporal criterion, Such as Ahmad Zaki Badawi who states that youth stage of individuals range between 18-24 years (Badawi, 1977, p. 17). While some countries views that the youth stage reaches up to 35

years, while others state that it reaches up to 40 years (Qattam, 1987, p. 61), as for the Islamic view, the youth age range between 15 to 40 years, which is the age of discretion (Al-Ziqani, 2001, p. 25).

The research discusses the meaning of the youth for individuals whose ages range between (18-35) years, who have been displaced into Al-Amiriya camp in the city of Fallujah in 2019 AD. Those who should employ their abilities and potentials to be positively addressed and change the problems surrounding their present and future; nevertheless, their ability to build bridges of intercultural dialogue (Darwish, 2015, p. 23).

**Tendency:** It refers to the emotional readiness towards a specific goal which can be accepted or rejected and that is expressed behaviorally, verbally, or even by gestures of the face or eyes. So, in this case, the tendency is a mental neurological preparation that an individual has towards a specific situation. It reflects on his behavior, negatively or positively; however, the response to this situation can be somewhat fixed in similar situations (Muhammad, 2011, p. 8). Or, it can be predisposition, willingness, or preparedness to respond in acceptance or rejection towards that situation. Most of the individual's attitudes or tendencies are formulated under the effect of social, political, economic and ideological conditions, or rather the product of the process of socialization which is considered as an interactive process between the individual and society (1) Therefore, the tendencies are not genetic but they are framed under the influence of social heritage of the individuals. In the other words, they can be subjected to modification and development due to social stimuli; moreover, they are measurable or evaluative, having relative stability and continuity (Siddiq, 2012, p. 302).

**Religion:** Religion has been defined as an integrated and ideal system of beliefs and practices that individuals perform toward sacred objects and these beliefs and practices unite under the umbrella of spirit of solidarity (Dunkin, 1980, p. 347). As for George Latterberg defines religion as a field that contains the patterns of attitudes, beliefs and decisions which are based on some sacred or binding social relations. Besides, religion includes building activities that are affected in those patterns (Jaber, 2003, p. 246). Others state that religion is popular practices and beliefs that help believers to understand and deal with the universe. Furthermore, its interpretation can be diversified to suit the current systems, conditions, environments, ways of living, and the status in social structures and institutions. In the other words, its interpretation is suitable to tackle the crisis in the time and the place it occurs." (Barakat , P. 1996, p. 231).

**Table No. (2) showing the rhetoric of clerics in Iraq**

<b>percentage</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>terms</b>
<b>15%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>patriotic</b>
<b>11%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>extremist</b>
<b>5.5%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>democratic</b>

<b>36%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>sectarian</b>
<b>5.5%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>delusional</b>
<b>22%</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>Partisan/ Affiliated to movement</b>
<b>5%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>contradictory</b>
<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>The sum</b>

The results of the above table shows the nature of the clerics' speech in Iraq. It is observed that within (72) respondents; the answers of (36%) are sectarian. The answers of (22%) state that the speeches of cleric is partisan / or affiliated to a movement, followed by (15%) who allege that the cleric's speech is patriotic, and by (11%) the answer is extremist. (5.5%) whose answer that their speeches are ranged between the democratic and the delusional; followed by (5%) whose answers are contradictory. it turns out from the table that the characteristics of the cleric's rhetoric is not for the sake of national interest due to the contradiction in answers.

**Table No. (3) clarifies the impact of clerics' instructions and directives on the youth due to the nature of their inclination.**

<b>Percentage</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>description</b>
<b>58.5%</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>Follow all the instructions and directives</b>
<b>24.5</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>Deal with their instructions and directives according to my personal interest</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Apparently support their instructions and directives but against them internally</b>
<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>The sum</b>

It is observed that the impact of clerics' instructions and directives on the youth due to the nature of their inclination. In broader sense, the young people interests determine their religious interaction with clerics' guidance. The table consists of (117) respondents shows that, (58.5%) of the total number of the sample follows clerics' instructions and directives, followed by (49) respondents at a rate of (24.5%) who deal with their instructions and

directives selectively according to their personal interests. (34) respondents, at a rate of (17%) who apparently support them but they disagree with them internally.

**Table No. (4) clarifies how clerics deal with political issues**

Percentage	frequency	terms
15%	39	Interference in all political details
5.5%	11	Suffice to present advices and directives concerning persistent political and strategic affairs
79.5%	159	Being neutral, without interference in political issues
100	200	The sum

**Table No. (5) describes the nature of clerics in dealing with armed action.**

Disagree		agree		The groups
%	No.	%	No.	
38.5	77	61.5	123	Link with armed groups which practice violence and terrorism in Iraq
22	44	78	156	Support sectarianism among the components of Iraqi community

14	28	86	172	Having an influence in recruiting young boys for terrorist acts
9.5	19	90.5	181	Cultivate youth on carrying weapons more than developing them culturally and socially

With regard to the nature of clerics in dealing with political affairs, it is observed that (159) respondents, at a rate of (79.5%) of the total sample, who prefer the clerics to be neutral without interfere in any matter related to political affairs, followed by (30) respondents with a rate of (15%) of the total sample who prefer that clerics must interfere in all political details. Moreover, it is noticed that (11) respondents, at a rate of (5.5%) of the total sample, prefer cleric must only provide guidance and advices on strategic and urgent political issues.

The results of the above table clarifies the nature of clerics' inclination concerning the armed groups. It is observed that (181) respondents, at a rate of (90.5%), agree that the clerics educate young people to bear arms more than focusing on social and cultural education and awareness; followed by (86%) who agree that the clerics work on to influence the recruitment of children in armed operations; and by (78%) of the sample agree that the clerics stand behind fueling sectarianism among the components of Iraqi society; while (61.5%) agree that the clerics are associated with armed groups that practice violence and terrorism in Iraq

**Table No. (6) Clarifies the estimate of respondents concerning the social activities conducted by clerics in their cities.**

Total		Absolutely disagree	disagree to certain extent	Agree to certain extent	Absolute ly agree	The level of agreement items
percentage	Frequen cy					
	200	74	60	46	20	Establish new relationships with the people of other components
100%		37%	30%	23%	10%	

	200	82	62	38	18	Stress on restricting weapons to the state
100%		%41	%31	%19	%9	
	200	78	48	56	20	Issuing fatwa against Iraqi bloodshed and fight sectarianism
100%		39%	24%	28%	10%	
	200	69	65	30	36	Helping the pure people who are elderly, disabled, ill, widows and divorce women.
100%		34.5%	32.5%	15%	18%	
	200	94	69	29	8	Stress on conducting training courses to develop youth skills in computer, education and foreign languages
100%		47%	34.5%	14.5%	4%	
	200	10	15	41	134	Support objection movements (demonstration and strikes)
100%		5%	7.5%	20.5%	67%	
	200	67	50	39	44	Embody the concept of tolerance and love in peace
100%		33.5%	25%	19.5%	22%	
	200	100	70	20	10	Respect and appreciate women
100%		50%	35%	10%	5%	
	200	58	53	56	33	Sincere in dealing with society
100%		29%	26.5%	28%	16.5%	
	200	55	41	41	63	Respect clerics who affiliate to other sects
100%		27.5%	20.5%	20.5%	31.5%	

	200	118	34	19	29	In my city people trust clerics due to their integrity and effect in society
100%		59%	17%	9.5%	14.5%	

The results of the above table shows that the respondents' answers regarding the social activities which may be provided by the clerics in their city. The results can be summarized as follows:

- The results of the answer to the first item, which clarifies the good relationships within the various components of Iraqi community. The option that shows 'absolutely disagree' has obtained the highest response rate, as it reaches up to (74) by the ratio (37%); followed by (30%) whose answers 'disagree to certain extent'. Whose answers 'agreed to certain extent' is at the ratio (23%). While the lowest ratio of respondents answers of the option 'absolutely agreed', consisting (20) by the ratio(10%).

- The results of the answers in the second item clarify the importance of restricting weapons to the hand of the state and rejecting all militarization. (82) respondents by the ratio (41%) show the option that is 'absolutely disagree' which is the highest response rate; followed by (31%) who go for the option 'disagree to some extent'. Followed by (19%) of the respondents answers 'agree to some extent'. While the lowest ratio of the respondents reaches (18) by (9%) whose answers 'absolutely agree'.

- The results of the answer in the third items clarify the Fatwa concerning the sanctity of Iraqi blood and combating sectarian strife. It turns out the option 'absolutely disagree', received the highest response rate which reaches up to (78) by (39%); followed by, those who agreed to some extent which reaches (28%); and those whose answer 'do not agree to some extent' reaches (24%). Furthermore, the lowest percentage of answers which are absolutely agreed reaches up to (20) by the ratio (10%).

- The results of the answers in the fourth item clarify helping those who are needy, such as those who are elderly, ill, orphans, widows, divorced women and displaced persons. The study shows that the option 'absolutely disagreed' gets the highest response rate, as it reached (69) by (34.5%); followed by (32.5%) whose answers 'disagree to some extent'; concerning those whose answers 'absolutely agree' the ratio reaches up to (18%). While, the lowest response rate reaches (30) respondents by the ratio (15%) whose answers 'disagree to some extent'.

- The results of the answer to the fifth item clarify the emphasis on establishing youth training courses, included remedial lessons in school subjects computer skills, learning languages and development. The result shows that the option 'absolutely disagree' has received the highest response rate as it reached (94) by (47%), followed by (34.5%) whose answers, 'disagree to some extent; moreover, those whose answers 'agreed to some extent' reaches up to (14.5) %); while the lowest response rate of the option 'absolutely agree', as they reached (8) respondents by the ratio (4%).

- The results of the answer to the sixth item clarify the support of protest movements (sit-ins/ demonstrations). It shows that the option that 'absolutely agree' gets the highest response rate, as it reaches (134) respondents by (67%); followed by (20.5%), whose answers 'agree to some extent'; and the rate of those whose



answers 'disagree to some extent' reaches up to (7.5%). Furthermore, the lowest rate of answers concerning the option 'absolutely disagree' reaches (10) respondents by the ratio (5%).

- The results of the answer to the seventh item, which clarifies the embodiment of the concept of tolerance and love in Islam. It shows that the option 'absolutely agree' gets the highest response rate, as it reached (67) respondents by (33.5); followed by (22%) of those whose answers 'absolutely agreed'; furthermore, the ratio reaches (19.5%) for those whose answers 'agreed to some extent'. While the lowest rate of answers is for the option 'agree to some extent' which reaches (39) respondents by (19.5%).

- The results of the answers to the eighth item clarify the respect for the woman and her status are appreciated in society. It shows that the option 'absolutely disagree' gets the highest response rate, as it reached (100) respondents by (50%); followed by (35%) whose answers 'disagree to some extent'; Furthermore, the answers of (10%) is 'agreed some extent'. While, the lowest percentage of answers is for the option 'absolutely agreed' which its respondents reaches (10) by (5%).

- The results of the answer to the ninth item clarify that the clerics are sincere in their dealings with society. It showed that the option 'absolutely disagree' gets the highest response rate, as it reached (58) respondents by (29%); followed by (28%) whose answer 'agree to some extent'. Furthermore, (26.5%) whose answer 'disagree to some extent'. As for the lowest rate of answers for the option 'absolutely agree' which consists of (33) respondents by (16.5%).

- The results of the answer to the tenth item clarify the respect for clerics who are affiliated to other schools of thought or sects. It shows that the option 'absolutely agree' receives the highest response rate, as it reaches (63) respondents by (31.5%); followed by a ratio of (27.5%) whose answers 'absolutely disagree'; moreover, the rate of (20.5%) whose responses ranged from 'agree to some extent' / 'disagree to some extent'.

The results of the answer to the eleventh item which clarify people's confidence in their city. It shows people's confidants in clerics due to their honesty and effect in society. It turned out that the option 'absolutely disagree' gets the highest response rate, as it reached (118) respondents by (59%); followed by (17%) whose answers 'disagree to some extent; and (14.5%) of the respondents answer 'absolutely agree'. While the lowest response rate is for the option 'agreed to some extent' consisting (19) respondents by (9.5%).

### **Interpretation of Results Within Field Indicators.**

The researcher deals with the results of the study and their interpretation in the light of the hypotheses and trying to clarify the attitudes (inclination) of young people towards the clerics

The hypothesis of the study.

There are differences of statistical significance among young people according to the variable (age, education, and pension status) and the nature of their attitudes towards clerics in Iraq.

The hypothesis is accepted in the current study as shown below ...

- The difference between ages of the respondents and the nature of their inclinations towards clerics: The results of the statistical analysis indicated that there are significant differences between the ages of the respondents

and the nature of their attitudes (inclinations) towards the clerics in Iraq, as the value of Chi- square reaches (81.332) in terms of (0.01) and as shown in the following table ..

**Table No. (7) shows the difference between the age of the respondents and the nature of their inclination towards clerics.**

indicator	Chi-square	The sum		Agree with them apparently; disagree with them internally		Dealing with their advices and directives selectively		Implement their advices and directives		Inclination ages
		ratio	No.	ratio	No.	ratio	No.	ratio	No.	
0.01	81.332	37.5%	73	8%	16	8%	16	20.5%	41	18-20
		25%	50	3%	6	4%	8	18%	36	23-21
		38.5	77	6%	12	12.5%	25	20%	40	26-24
		100	200	17%	34	24.5	49	58.5	117	The sum

The data of the above table shows that there are statistically significant differences between the ages of the respondents and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics. It has been shown that the age group ranging between (18-20) has the highest percentage in the application of all the advices and directives, consisting of (41) respondents with a ratio of (20,5) followed by a the age group ranging between (24-26), consisting of (40), with a ratio of (20%), and with a number of (36) with a rate of (18%). The age group ranging between (21-23) is the lowest ratio in implementing the advices and directives of the clerics.

While the age group ranging between (24-26) is classified as the highest number of respondents who follow the advices and directives selectively, consisting of (25) respondents by the ratio (12.5%); followed by the age group ranging between (18-20), consisting of (16) respondents by the ration (8%).

While the age group ranging (18-20) is the highest percentage in supporting clerics in apparently and against them internally consisting of (16) respondents by the ratio (8%); followed by the age group ranging between (24-26) consisting of (12) respondents by the ratio (6%) and by (3%), within the age group ranging between (21-23).

**Table No. (8)**

indicator	Chi Square	The sum		Neutral without interfering concerning political issues		Giving advices concerning persisting political strategic issues		Interference in all political details		Inclination education
		ratio	No.	ratio	No.	ratio	No.	ratio	No.	
0.00	77.221	22%	44	18.5%	29	1%	2	6.5%	13	Low education level
		23%	46	17%	34	1%	2	5%	10	Medium education level
		55%	110	48%	96	3.5%	7	3.5%	7	High education level
		100	200	79.5	159	5.5	11	15	30	The sum

This means that there is a significant difference between the ages of the respondents and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics. So, this makes us accept the alternative hypothesis in the study and reject the null hypothesis.

The difference between education and the nature of the inclination : that the results of the statistical analysis indicate that there are significant differences between the educational level of the respondents and the nature of their attitudes (inclinations) towards clerics in Iraq, as the value of Chi- square reaches up to (77.211) in terms of (0.002) as indicated in the following table ..

**Table No. (9) clarifies the difference between living status of the respondents and the nature of their inclination towards clerics**

indicator	chi-squared	The sum		disagree		agree		Cultivate youth to carry weapons Living status
		ratio	No.	ratio	No.	ratio	No.	
0.00	82.461	36.5	73	3.5	7	33	66	Enough

		22	44	4.5	9	17.5	35	More than enough
		41.5	83	2	4	39.5	79	Not enough
		100	200	10	20	90	180	المجموع

The data of the above table shows that there is a significant difference between the living conditions of the respondents and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics. So, it is noticed that those who agreed to educate young people to bear weapons reach up to (79) respondents; and (39.5) for those who have low level of living standard; and (33) respondents agree who they have a standard of living sufficient to meet their need, followed by a ratio of (17.5) respondents agree whose their a standard of living more than enough.

Those who do not agree to urge young people to bear weapons consists of (9) respondents, at a rate of (4.5) whose their standard of living is more than enough; and by (3.5) respondents do not agree whose their standard of living is sufficient to meet their needs; followed by a ratio of (2) respondents who do not agree whose their a standard of living is not enough to meet their needs. The data shows that there is a significant difference between the living conditions of the respondents and the nature of their attitudes towards the clerics, and this makes us accept the alternative hypothesis in the study and reject the null hypothesis.

### III. Conclusion

By depending on questions, answers and the results obtained from the survey, the study concludes the following points:

In the current research, it is shown via the distribution of the respondents' age levels that there are five age groups starting (18-21) and ending in the age group (30-35); these ages represent the youth category. While the educational level of the research sample starts from the low education level reaches by (21 %), Whereas the ratio of intermediate education is (37%); followed by the ratio of higher education (84%) of the total sample. As the choices of the sample come intentionally from displaced people. Moreover, the results of the survey reveal that the ratio of those whose their monthly income is often not sufficient to meet their basic needs (i.e. a low standard of living) has reached about (44%) of the total sample units; while the ratio of those who describe their income is sufficient to manage their daily life but far from what is perfect (43%) of the total sample units; while (35%) of the sample is described as prospered due to their sufficient income (i.e. a luxury standard of living).

The results of the survey indicates that the respondents' intentions concerning the nature of their agreement or not with the speech of the clerics in Iraq. As it becomes clear that (36%) of the respondent see the clerics' rhetoric as sectarian; (22%) see their rhetoric as partisan; (15%) see the rhetoric as patriotic; by 11% their rhetoric is strict, and by (5.5%) ranged Their rhetoric between the democrat and the delusional.

There are disparities in the respondents' opinions regarding the influence of clerics' guidance and directives, as the results shows that about (58.5%) of the total sample units follow all the clerics' advices and directives; followed by (49) respondents with a percentage (24.5%) of the total sample units who deal with their advices and directives selectively according to their personal interests. Furthermore, it is observed that (34) respondents, at a rate of (17%) of the total units of the sample who apparently support them and internally disagree with them.

The analysis indicators reveal that the youth prefer that the cleric take neutral position towards political affairs or they do not interfere in any matter related to political affairs at a rate of (79.5%), followed by (30) respondents at the rate (15%) of the total sample units who prefer clerics to interfere in all political details, as it is noticed that (11) respondents, at a rate of (5.5%) of the total sample units, prefer clerics only to provide guidance and advice on strategic and urgent political issues.

The results of the survey reveals the nature of the clerics dealing with the armed actions, as it is observed that (181) respondents, at a rate of (90.5%), agree that the clerics educate young people to bear arms more than focusing on social and cultural education and awareness; followed by (86%) who agree on the fact that the clerics have an influence on the recruitment of children in armed operations; and 78% agree on the option that the clerics stand behind fueling sectarianism among the components of Iraqi society. However, it is observed that (61.5%) agree that the clerics are associated with armed groups that practice violence and terrorism in Iraq.

The study reveals that there are differences between youth attitudes and tendencies towards clerics in Iraq. According to the age variable, educational level, and living level.

The results of the study shows that the highest percentage which is maximum (20.5%) of the age group ranged between (18-20) who follow all the advices and directives of the clerics, while the age group ranging between (24-26) is the highest in this category which is (12.5%) deal with the clerics' advices and directives selectively.

It turns out that the highest percentage of those who disagree with interference of clerics in any issue related to political affairs is (48%); this group is characterized of having a high educational level; followed by the highest percentage of a low educational level (6.5%) who agree with clerics' interference in all political details. While a high education level group at the percentage (3.5) agree that clerics can only provide guidance and advice on urgent strategic and political issues concerning the state.

The study reveals that there is a link between the impact of the living situation on young people and the nature of their attitude (inclination) towards clerics. It is shown that (39.5%) of the sample with low living standard agree to recruit young people in armed groups; followed by a ratio of (33%) of the sample who agree to recruit young people in armed groups who have sufficient living standard to meet their needs; moreover, by (17.5%) of those who have more than enough living standard agree also to recruit youth in armed group.

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