

Children nowadays are less stressed than before. Do you agree?

Stress, specifically psychological distress, is an issue that should not be disregarded on a whim. Manifesting in various forms such as anxiety and fatigue, it can severely affect an individual's well-being if not treated appropriately. Against a backdrop of rapid change in lifestyle as a result of accelerating technological advancement, the issue of stress among children is a topic of discussion that has gained popularity in recent years. My point of view regarding this is that children nowadays are less stressed than before due to the prevalence of more well-established families and a more inclusive attitude towards children, despite the increasing expectation of one's academic performances.

First and foremost, children nowadays experience less stress than the previous eras because of an improvement in the financial status of most families, in particular households in urban and suburban settings like Singapore. Due to various factors such as globalisation, revolution in technology and many others, middle-class families with a more affluent financial status has increasingly become a norm in many regions globally nowadays. This allows for the access of a more expanded and diversified source of entertainment for the children, ranging from video games to board games, which should enable them to have fun and thus reduce their stress effectively. More importantly, with legislation also contributing for this, it also eliminates the need for child labour in the form of physically demanding jobs which subjects the young to physical, and consequently emotional, pressure. These economic factors in turn contribute to a reduction in stress among children.

Other than that, the social environment nowadays are more friendly and inclusive towards children. During the olden days when a majority of the population did not do well financially, children in general received less attention than deserved from adults. Apart from the issue of child labour previously highlighted which is a result of lack of access to the right of education and inflicts a great amount of social pressure to youngsters, even if some children were fortunate enough to have the chance to attend classes in schools, children were still not well respected by the teachers and their parents because of a deficiency in educational resource and a stigma that assumed children to be inherently naughty and immature which was widespread among the society during that period. On the other hand, due to a higher level of literacy and standard of education as well as improved economy nowadays, child labour is non-existent in most countries. Children's thoughts and behaviours receive more rational and thoughtful reactions. Such social development hence makes children nowadays less stressful.

Nonetheless, there is a sentiment shared by a number of people which highlights the increase in academic expectation towards kids today leading to worsening stress among children. Indeed, this view makes some sense in view of the increasing amount of studying time, assignments and so-called enrichment classes that parents and schools these days subject children to. However, we should not overlook the reform of today's educational system that focuses more on the holistic character development of children, which is achieved through the increased time allocation for hands-on activities, group events and interest group activities that aim for allowing children to explore their own hobbies which can benefit them emotionally and help them in developing a healthier mind set. Therefore, there are still avenues for children to learn in a less stressful manner.

All in all, thanks to developments and changes in the world's economy, society and education nowadays, children today generally experience a less amount of psychological distress than before. However, this does not invalidate the concern of mental conditions among children as it is still a problem that haunts several communities around the world, especially considering issues such as cyberbullying and sexual harassment which makes this issue even more nuanced than before. This calls for the cooperation between multiple stakeholders to address this problem in a meaningful approach.

Do you agree that traditions are important in today's society?

The world today has been undergoing a ceaseless trend of modernisation and technological advancements which has resulted in a general improvement in people's quality of life and scientific intellect. As more and more people embrace urbanised lifestyles involving modern outfits, electronic gadgets and fast food, people also start to wonder whether traditions, which are a certain set of customs that are passed down from ancestors decades or even centuries ago, are still relevant in today's society. In this article, I argue that traditions are still important in today's society because tradition provides us a sense of identity and belonging via valuable cultural heritages as well as reinforces moral values that guide us in life, even though they may be perceived as dubious and meaningless practices.

Retaining traditions in this modern society is important in nurturing a sense of identity and belonging. In particular, cultural heritages that are passed down from our respective family's ancestors and facing a threat of extinction due to globalisation serve a major role in this respect. A notable example is the local Chinese dialects such as Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese which are facing a constant drop in the number of fluent speakers in Singapore, especially among the younger generations, yet they remain an integral part in the local ethnic Chinese community in Singapore within which a lot of people still obtain a sense of identity, or a feeling of being at home. By sharing a common tradition, people of similar backgrounds can also come together and foster a close-knit community, while sharing their own traditions to other groups of people as well, resulting in a diverse yet united society.

The preservation of traditions is also beneficial to us in today's society as traditional customs can serve as a moral compass that guide us in a life in this modern society that is full of material temptations and negative influences, such as being addicted to watching television and playing video games, along with the uncontrolled consumption of unhealthy food or even alcohol. The mainstream lifestyle practised in this urbanised society that prioritises individual material success also causes lots of people to forgo moral values in the pursuit of materialistic pleasures. On the other hand, traditional festivals such as Tomb Sweeping Day which is celebrated in Singapore and the Day of the Dead that is celebrated in Mexico serve as examples that illustrate the benefits of tradition in reminding us of the importance of honouring our ancestral roots, which in turn teaches us a valuable ethical lesson in life.

Nevertheless, there is a sentiment regarding traditions shared by some which assert that they are based on beliefs that are not scientifically justified, and thus unhelpful to the development of the society. A case in point that is cited multiple times is the celebration of the Hungry Ghost Festival in Singapore, which stems from the superstitious belief that spirits from the underworld would visit the human world every July in the lunar calendar, and involves the custom of openly burning joss papers, thereby causing issues including air pollution. However, this does not mean that a tradition cannot adapt to the current needs of contemporary society without sacrificing its own existence. For instance, the burning of joss papers during Hungry Ghost Festival could be replaced by visits to temples and cemeteries to pay tributes so that the environmental concerns can be addressed.

In conclusion, traditions still have great relevance in this present-day society as it equips us with a cultural identity, promotes communal harmony and serves as a moral guide, in spite of concerns regarding their low scientific value at times. While traditions help us in understanding ourselves and appreciating the world around us, even providing a purpose in life to some, they are struggling to maintain relevance in this increasingly technologically dependent society. This calls for proactive measures from all involved parties to preserve these valuable assets.