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Research - Shall we talk about filial piety?

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Shall We Talk about Filial Piety?

Emily Chan | Photography: Nicholas Ooi

Several cases of “parents murdering” have been reported in Hong Kong recently, which raised the alarm that whether teenagers nowadays have no sense of “Filial Piety”. So how important is filial piety to the younger generation? To find out, Commission on Youth has commissioned Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies through Home Affairs Bureau to conduct a research entitled “Views on Filial Piety among Youth in Hong Kong”.

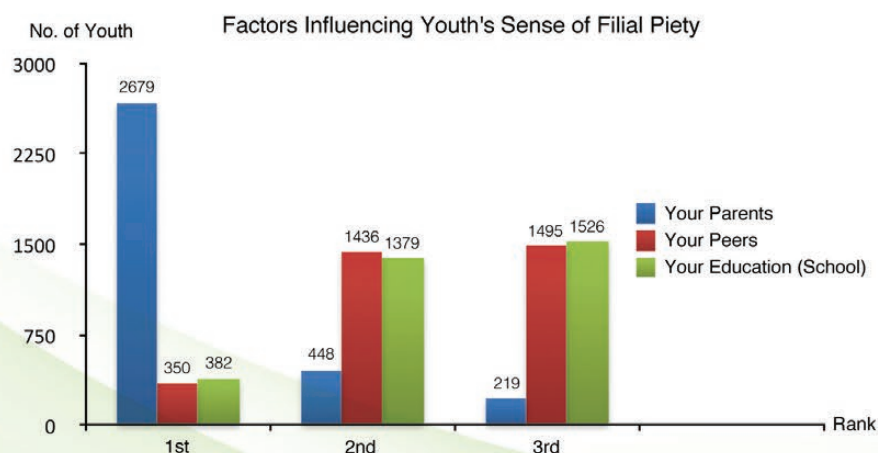
Hong Kong Teenagers Not Weak in Filial Concept

The research was conducted in two phases, the first phase, namely “Intergenerational Workshop”, was sound in awaking teenagers’ awareness towards filial piety, which details were disclosed in our previous volume. Making use of “Questionnaire Survey”, the second stage aimed at investigating the understanding of “filial expressions” and “filial perceptions” of Hong Kong’s young people by extensively collecting quantitative data, so as to widen the applicability of results found in the first phase.

Survey results showed that the sense of filial piety amongst youths is not as weak as the society perceived (Filial Attitudinal Index (FAI) mean score: 3.81 out of 6; and Filial Behavioural Index (FBI) mean score: 4.15 out of 6), reflecting that youths nowadays still hold firm to the essence of filial piety. They still care for their parents and often put filial piety into actions.

Parents Inescapable in Formulating Youths’ Moral Sense

Society emphasises the need for schools to strengthen ethical education in curriculum, and schools would be deemed fully responsible for any teenagers committing moral delinquency. However, results of study showed that the old saying of “Raising a child without teaching is the fault of parents” is still valid nowadays. Parents setting personal examples have the most eminent influence on the filial attitudes and behaviours of children. Those teenagers who think that their parents are attitudinally or behaviourally not filial score lower in both FAI and FBI.



Public may have the misconception that teenagers avoid talking about filial piety, thinking that it is too old-fashioned. In fact, over 70% of the new generation welcome demands on the observance of filial piety. This signifies that parents play an important role in moulding their children morally. Discrepancy between research result and social perception on youths' conduct is due to a disparity in the understanding and expectation of filial piety in the society as its definition changes: traditional concept of filial piety is "one-way", requiring filialness from children's obedience, while its modern standard is a "reciprocal" relationship. Parents' wishes are not to be fulfilled unconditionally by children. Instead, through communication, parents and children will get along with each other with mutual care and respect.

Home-school Cooperation to Build Filial Piety in Society

Facing various ethical challenges from society, there is an urgent request for promoting filial piety. Nonetheless, while the concept of filial piety is too vague, with imperfect information, it would be ineffective to rely solely on parents to boost children's sense of filial piety. Thus, schools are suggested to be more supportive to family-oriented promotion campaigns for filial piety as well as to encourage a keener participation of youths, such that positive moral concepts can be developed amongst both youths and their senior family members.

As the Analects goes, "Filial piety and fraternal submission are the roots of benevolence". As teenagers are the masters of future, we have to promote filial piety so that proper ethical standards and perceptions can be imprinted in their mind when they are young, that they will do goods later and be beneficial to the healthy development of family and even society.



Comparing "Filial Attitude" and "Filial Behaviour" of Parents

| | Filial Attitudinal Index (FAI) | | Filial Behavioral Index (FBI) | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
| | Frequency | Mean | Frequency | Mean |
| Parents with less filial attitude | 115 | 3.33 | 115 | 3.19 |
| Others | 3329 | 3.83 | 3329 | 4.18 |
| Parents with fewer filial behaviours | 162 | 3.41 | 162 | 3.31 |
| Others | 3284 | 3.83 | 3284 | 4.19 |

