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KomU as a Strategy to Improve Family Communications

Public Health and the Natural Environment

Foreword and Acknowledgements

2020 was a year like no other as the pandemic changed many aspects of our lives. In a sense, that made early 2021 an ideal time to ask the question: how would you address some of the biggest challenges in Asia in the coming decade? In January 2021, the Asia Business Council joined hands with Nikkei Asia and the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford to launch the Asia's Challenge 2030 Global Essay Competition, open to students aged 18-22 anywhere in the world.

Given the many obstacles facing young people pursuing their studies during a global pandemic, we did not know how many essays we would receive. Yet we were impressed by thoughtful submissions from universities across Asia and as far afield as California and London. We pored over essays on topics ranging from artificial intelligence and aquaculture to smart cities and virus sequencing and learned a lot in the process.

The essays reflect a generation that is asking hard questions about the challenges facing Asian societies and optimistic about the prospects for creating a better world through new modes of doing business and innovative approaches to policymaking.

Young people from Asia are increasingly globally aware. They want policymakers to adopt international best practices in public health and environmental protection, especially in areas like sustainable finance and mental health awareness. But they reject the uncritical adoption of Western models, from urban design to economic development. Many call for a celebration of their unique national and regional identities, whether through locally inspired architectural designs or the increased representation of indigenous perspectives.

Participants in the Economy, Trade, and Finance category want to improve existing economic models so that a balance is struck between economic growth and a fairer, more sustainable, and more stable world.

In the Public Health and the Natural Environment category, respondents called for holistic approaches to health. Concerns about mental wellness reflect the pressures brought about by increasingly competitive academic and professional environments, while essays about communications and interpersonal relationships demonstrate the desire for a more intentional focus on modeling healthy relationships. Still other submissions addressed the existential crisis posed by climate change and the complicated web of interrelated challenges, from plastic waste to fossil fuel use. Proposed solutions range from changes in consumer behavior to an entirely new model of development.

In the Cities and Urban Development category, the essays we received reflected a desire for smarter, more walkable, climate resilient cities, and urban environments that reflect their unique local character. Whether as consumers, as employees, or as entrepreneurs themselves, this younger generation will demand that businesses and governments adopt sustainable practices and modes of operation that benefit their communities.

This global essay competition would not have been possible without the support of the former and current Chairmen of the Asia Business Council, Lim Boon Heng of Temasek and Daniel Tsai of Fubon Group. We are also indebted to Vice-chairman Tak Niinami of Suntory Group and Council Trustee Nazir Razak of Ikhlas Capital, who made key introductions to Nikkei Asia and the Blavatnik School.

Special thanks must also go to Shigasaburo Okumura and Daisuke Akazawa, Editor-in-chief and Chief Producer of Nikkei Asia, and Ngaire Woods and Luna Sidhu, Founding Dean and Director of Development of the Blavatnik School, for making this competition possible.

We would also like to thank our judges who generously volunteered their time and energy.

Economy, Trade, and Finance category:
- Nobuyoshi John Ehara, Co-founder, Unison Capital
- Emily Jones, Associate Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
- Katsuhiko Hara, Chief Desk Editor, Nikkei Asia

Public Health and the Natural Environment category:
- George Tahija, Principal, PT Austindo Nusantara Jaya Tbk
- Maya Tudor, Associate Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
- Futoshi Kuwamoto, Business & Market News Editor, Nikkei Asia

Cities and Urban Development category:
- Zhang Xin, Founder and CEO, SOHO China
- Sir Paul Collier, Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
- Shin Nakayama, News Editor, Nikkei Asia

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ashleigh Au of SOHO China Scholarships and Ruth Collier of Oxford University in publicizing the contest.

There is no doubt that this generation will be profoundly shaped by the experience of living through the world-altering events of 2020 during their formative years. But most essays took the longer view instead of focusing solely on the pandemic, looking ahead to the challenges of the next decade and beyond. Policymakers and business leaders around the world should take note of their ideas as this young generation comes of age and begins to lead local and international development in multiple fields.

Pauline Yeung
Program Director
Asia Business Council

Colleen Howe
Program Associate
Asia Business Council

Award-winning Essays

Economy, Trade, and Finance

Krati Gupta (India)

Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law

The Three Pillar Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Responsible Financing:
Addressing Asia's Challenges in the "Decade of Action"

Chloris Jiaqi Kang (Singapore)

National University of Singapore

Private Money for the Public Good –
Unlocking Private Equity for Asia's Sustainable Finance

Henry Michael Mayhew (United Kingdom)

University College London

Asian Central Bank Mandates: What about Equality?

Public Health and the Natural Environment

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Yao Yuanchen (China)

Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Meeting the Challenge of Plastic Waste Recycling in Japan and China

Suzu Yokoyama (Japan)

Tsuda University

Tackling Unrealistic Beauty Standards in Japan and South Korea

Cities and Urban Development

Matthew Flores (Philippines)

Ateneo de Manila University

Indigenous Cities: Reframing Modernity and Our Cities

Rya Jetha (United States)

Pomona College

Reinventing the Asian Megacity: Absorbing Climate Change with Sponge Design

Ranita Ma Tsz Yu (Hong Kong SAR)

Chinese University of Hong Kong

From a City-scale Beauty Pageant to a Continent-wide Diversified Gallery

Ashley Faith Santoso (Indonesia)

Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia

The Neglected Effects of Gender-based Violence towards Jakarta's Urban Walkability

Hanun Thalia (Indonesia)

Universitas Indonesia

KomU as a Strategy to Improve Family Communications

Background

Families are the smallest unit and the main pillars of society and the nation. The role of families is so significant that the former UN Secretary General in 2010 stated that "the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Thus, policies focusing on improving the well-being of families are certain to benefit development." Yet, according to a number of newspaper and government reports, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased family conflicts worldwide, some of which can even be considered violence. In Indonesia, for example, quarrels and fights were the reason for 58% of divorce cases filed, making it the primary reason for divorce two years in a row.

Effect of family conflicts on individuals and family members

A family environment with constant conflict will not fulfil basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, individuals are unlikely to be able to satisfy the needs which are essential for psychological growth, integrity, and wellbeing. In addition, while there is evidence of the powerful consequences of family relations on individual functioning, not only does family conflict affect adult individuals who are involved, but also children within that environment. Healthy family relations, marital relations, and parenting behaviors are conducive to well-functioning parents and children, while parental mental health problems, marital conflict, and low-quality parenting determine dysfunctions in children (e.g. low academic achievement and psychological problems). Research shows the impact of family breakdown can have a negative impact on children, both physically and psychologically, causing feelings of shame, sensitivity, low self-esteem, and withdrawal from the environment.

Communications failure as a source of conflict

Oftentimes, communication failures become the source of conflict, and even result in more conflict. To understand the influence of family communication on family conflict, there are two approaches proposed by Socha: (1) family communication plays a role in increasing positive family input (for example, increasing affection, creativity, hope, and happiness), (2) the optimal conditions created by family communication facilitate the development of family potential as well as individual growth and development. Indeed, communication in resolving conflicts is one of the most pressing problems that often occurs in relationships, with relationship therapists agreeing that dysfunctional communication is the most damaging and difficult to treat.

So, how can we improve communications within families?

I statement and Feedback Sandwich method in resolving communication issues. In these cases, Overall and McNutty suggested that direct communication that explicitly conveys problems to be addressed will be more successful than an indirect approach that may convey that changes are unnecessary and therefore fail to address the problem. Commonly recommended, the feedback sandwich is a method which involves delivering feedback in a particular order: a positive statement about specific behaviors the individual performed well, a corrective statement about behaviors the individual could change or improve, and an overall positive statement. The feedback sandwich has been adopted in a wide range of settings and professions (e.g. among physicians, nurses, coaches, educators, and managers). The method was endorsed as it enables individuals to send other individuals the message that they recognize their value while giving feedback. On the other hand, the I statement is a communication tool in which the first-person pronoun is used (using "I" instead of "you") such as "I am bothered by your habit" rather than "You have a bad habit," therefore reducing negativity and blame. The technique uses nonconfrontational methods to resolve conflict and can be used to establish meaningful dialogues that help foster a relationship of understanding.

Written tool to accommodate/facilitate communication

To understand the potential of text-based communication, we can look at two existing theories. The Hyperpersonal Model approach argued that interpersonal communication through text allows individuals to carefully construct messages, and attributions caused by those messages may be exaggerated in the absence of additional real-time visual and audio cues leading to hyperpersonal or enhanced impression. Backing this theory, studies have found that online content is better for increased self-esteem, interpersonal impressions, and may also influence impressions of the self. Another theory is the Internet-Enhanced Self-Disclosure (IESD) hypothesis which proposes that individuals often disclose more in text-based communication, which contributes to greater well-being. In support of this theory, studies have found that people often disclose more online than offline. Kluck et al. have also found that contact via text-based channels positively affected feelings of social support and life satisfaction in comparison to audio-visual communication, which had no significant effect on social connectedness and social support. Individuals stated that they used text-based channels to effortlessly exchange personal information.

KomU

Therefore, the author proposes KomU to improve family communications across Indonesia. KomU is a platform that leads effective communication based on the "I statement" and "Sandwich Feedback" methods. The program drives family members to use the principles of "I statement" and "Sandwich Feedback" by providing a template the members can fill to voice their concern and send. If they wish, they can opt to send the form anonymously. The default frequency of KomU use is on a weekly basis to ensure the exchanging of communication by every family member without making it seem one-sided and to prevent excessive criticism. With such a system, KomU aims to facilitate communication between family members in a nonthreatening and constructive way to prevent family conflicts and promote well-being. The

schedule and anonymity options are determined by the family members and can only be changed with the approval of all members. KomU will be promoted through social media targeting youth and young parents and motivating them to use the KomU, which can be used online across devices, in the family.

To test the effect of KomU, the author distributed a brief questionnaire with KomU samples. As a result, participants reported more positive feelings when presented with a KomU sample and were able to better recognize the feelings experienced by the other person as well as understanding the changes that were expected. Moreover, participants respond more positively to the KomU sample, reducing blank answers (choosing not to respond), avoidance to the problem, and blame.

What are you feeling in such a situation?	
Without KomU	**With KomU**
Disappointed (4)	Disappointed (2)
Angry (4)	Angry (1)
Upset (6)	Upset (1)
Sad (6)	Sad (4)
Regret / feeling guilty (8)	Regret / feeling guilty (7)
Confused (5)	Confused (0)
Shame (1)	Shame (0)
Tired (1)	Tired (0)
Not understood (1)	Not understood (0)
Not Comfortable (1)	Not Comfortable (0)
Feeling left behind (1)	Feeling left behind (0)
More comfortable / quiet (0)	More comfortable / quiet (6)
Can better understand / digest the situation (0)	Can better understand / digest the situation (3)
Touched (0)	Touched (3)
Feeling moved (0)	Feeling moved (1)
Feel valued / understood / understood 0)	Feel valued / understood / understood (13)
Happy (0)	Happy (3)
Relief (0)	Relief (5)

Do you understand her feeling and the change they wanted? (If yes, according to you what are they feeling and desiring?)	
Without KomU	**With KomU**
Yes and understand (20)	Yes and understand (33)
Yes but don't understand (8)	Yes but don't understand (0)
No (6)	No (0)

After reading the message, what will your reply be?	
Without KomU	**With KomU**
(Choose not to answer) (16)	(Choose not to answer) (8)
Ignore (Whatever , yes) (4)	Ignore (1)
Asked for forgiveness (6)	Asked for forgiveness (1)
Defensive (2)	Defensive (0)
Demanding an improvement in attitude / behavior (2)	Demanding an improvement in attitude / behavior (0)
Thank you (0)	Thank you (5)
Give thanks and seek change (0)	Give thanks and seek change (2)
Thank you, ask for forgiveness and seek change (0)	Thank you, ask for forgiveness and seek change (6)
Comforting feelings (1)	Comforting feelings (1)
Ask forgiveness and seek change (2)	Ask forgiveness and seek change (4)
Seeking change / resolution together (0)	Seeking a joint change / resolution (3)
Attempting to reflect the KomU format (0)	Attempting to reflect the KomU format (2)

Sustainable Development Goal 3 is aimed at ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages, and one of its targets (3.4) specifically mentions mental health, targeting the reduction by one-third of the premature death rate from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment, as well as the promotion of mental health and well-being. Strengthening family stability by improving the communicational and behavioral skills of family members could contribute to developing individual and relational capacities, which will have a positive impact on other areas of well-being and social life. Through family programs, such as education programs, community support groups, family therapy and counseling, families can be a key component in achieving individual health and wellbeing. Beyond that, UNICEF has reported the implications of family stability in child development, showing that targeting families may well promote Sustainable Development Goal 4, specifically indicator 4.2.2 in increasing the proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being. Lastly, improving communications has been found to reduce the experience of aggression in various settings, therefore tackling indicator 16.2.11 by reducing the proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers. The author strongly believes that KomU can become part of the solution to support families and increase wellbeing in Asia and worldwide.

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Prototype (Under construction): https://komu.vercel.app

Distributed sample of KomU (Translated to English from Indonesian)

A. Imagine you get a promotion at work, making you more preoccupied with additional tasks. When you come home, you are confused because your family members are holding events at home and they did not tell you about it. You asked about the events via a message online, and your family member was annoyed by your message and replied, "I've told you before, but you're always busy. Never mind, I'm too tired to talk about it."

- What are you feeling in such a situation?
- Do you understand her feeling and the change they wanted? (If yes, according to you what are they feeling and what do they want?)
- After reading the message, what will your reply be?

B. Imagine a situation that is similar to the previous, however, this time the message said, "I'm happy you got a promotion, but I've been feeling sad for a couple of weeks since I feel like I am not noticed. I would feel more appreciated if you listened to me more often. On the other hand, I will try to adapt to your busy life as well. I am happythat you continue to strive for the welfare of this family."

- What are you feeling in such a situation?
- Do you understand her feeling and the change they wanted? (If yes, according to you what are they feeling and what do they want?)
- After reading the message, what will your reply be?

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