

# INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



## The 21st Edition

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## THE RISING NEED TO ABOLISH THE PINK TAX, WHICH HINDERS GENDER EQUALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Jayana Rajani

As of 2025, the United Nations has one major task at hand, one that was meant to be fulfilled by 2030. With only 4 years left, the Sustainable Development Goals still seem miles from achievement. But why is that?

Much of the recent discussion around the United Nations has something to do with the elephant in the room—the SDGs. So why are we still so far from achieving them? The answer lies in the way our world progresses. Most of the issues our world faces today: poverty, lack of resources, injustice, climate change — are all issues that have existed for a while now. Why would they suddenly become any different now when more issues are consistently being added to the broth of already existing ones?

One goal that highlights this struggle is Sustainable Development Goal Number 5: Gender Equality.

The war for equality has been waging on for centuries yet progress remains slow. Even though women now hold a wide range of roles, from white-collar jobs to courtrooms and hospitals, they still do not stand as equals to men when it comes to economic and financial position.

Around the world, there are still many women who continue to fight their own financial struggles in silence. There are women who feel their endless struggle for equal pay will never see the dawn of hope and change. Others no longer believe equality is possible. Somewhere out there, such women do exist, though the world often chooses to ignore them, convinced that it has already come a long way to solve every crisis that will ever affect them. However, many women still fall prey to capitalism and fake promises of change. We need to bring not more rioting or closed courtroom trials, but more concrete proof of fairness in the economy. Somewhere in this world, a company continues to profit from this inequality, and that needs to change.



***One simple yet powerful concept that has finally, after years of capitalism, come to light is “pink tax”.***

It is no secret that women are still paid relatively less than men in the workforce. To top this already harmful inequality, the “pink tax” makes livelihood for independent women even tougher than it has to be. The pink tax is a form of price disparity which is not officially paid to the government. It is charged upon women, forcing them to pay higher prices than men on daily essentials and products such as clothing, hygiene products, shoes, cosmetics, and perfumes. The price difference is especially high for menstrual hygiene products. This extra tax, often unnoticed, puts a huge financial toll on women, who have no solution but to pay more for their basic necessities than their male counterparts.

In the past, the United Nations attempted to address gender-based economic disparities. An example of this was the A/RES/62/218 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on December 22, 2007. It expressed concern for the unequal social, economic, and political status of women and urgently called for member states to comply with the Convention and the Optional Protocol and work towards eliminating gender-based discrimination in every possible aspect.

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Yet even a legal framework, no matter how strong or authoritative, is never enough to solve problems which have root causes of human corruption and lack of understanding at societal levels.

This is supported by the persistence of pink tax, which shows how exploiting women can be done for years as a means to profit. Even large, trustworthy companies are equally disregardful of ethics and morals as simple as basic equality.

### ***Now that the damage is done, how do we solve it? What do we do?***

Sexism, at its core, is an ideology comprising strict gender roles and expectations that have been followed for centuries. To break that cycle is a difficult task for a single nation, given that the United Nations has struggled with this in the past.

So, the proposed rethink will have to be one that goes beyond legal frameworks and targets the closed mindsets of individuals. First, the discriminatory pricing practice at hand will have to be abolished. At present, no federal law or legal framework deems it a malpractice or an illegal act. This issue needs to be addressed urgently before it hinders global progress even more than it already has.

Next, women need to be trained and taught how to identify traces of these exploitative traditions. They need to be given active consumer awareness and education.

Lastly, for regions that already struggle with female employment and empowerment in public and private sectors, indigenous-owned businesses need to be established and promoted so women are employed, empowered, and do not fall prey to economic disparities. Altogether, by employing these solutions and paying attention to the ever increasing issues that pink tax poses, nations can move closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. 5, 8 and 10 —Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Reduced Inequalities.

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## ASTROLOGY: EXPLORING THE SIGNS AND THEIR ELEMENTS

Ngan Le

**A**strology is detailed analysis on the movements and positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars assuming that they have an influence on the personalities and fates of people. The history of astrology goes all the way back to 700 B.C., when the Babylonians first organized a system of celestial observation and created the zodiac wheel composed of 12 zodiac signs. The signs are commonly known as symbols of the 12 months in a year including: Aries (March 21st - April 19th); Taurus (April 20th - May 20th); Gemini (May 21st - June 20th); Cancer (June 21st - July 22nd); Leo (July 23rd - August 22nd); Virgo (August 23rd - September 22nd); Libra (September 23rd - October 22nd); Scorpio (October 23rd - November 21st); Sagittarius (November 22nd - December 21st); Capricorn (December 22nd - January 19th); Aquarius (January 20th - February 19th); and Pisces (February 20th - March 20th). Each sign has its own unique characteristics and energy, along with its strengths and weaknesses. It should be noted that these are just stereotypes for the signs and not everybody born as a certain sign will share the same traits.

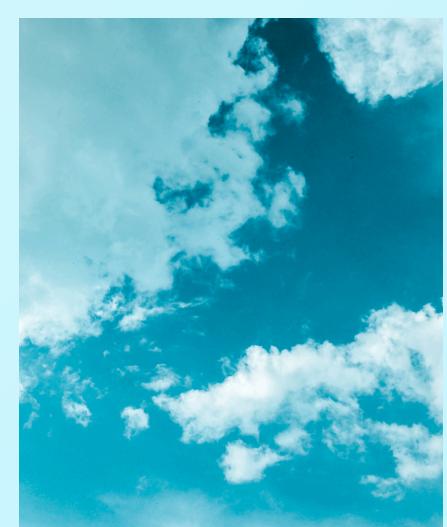
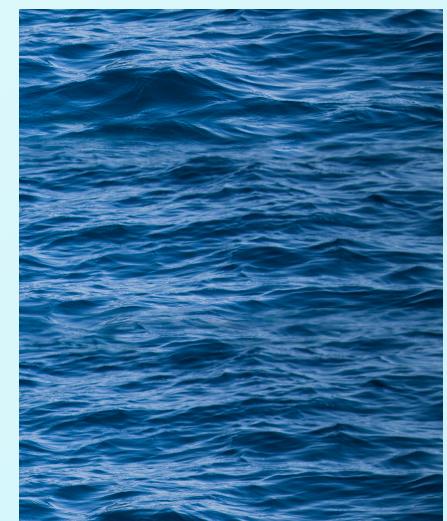
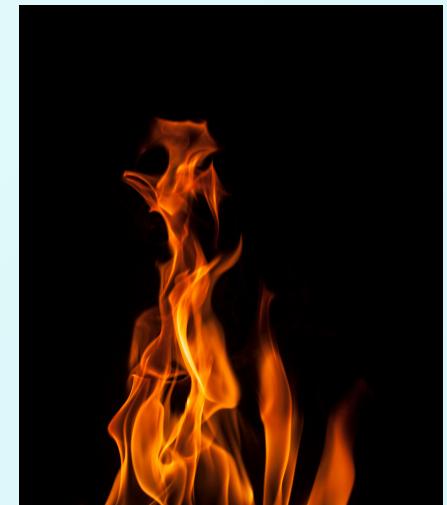
### ***The 12 zodiac signs are categorized into 4 groups based on their elements.***

The first element is Fire which consists of Leo, Sagittarius and Aries. These signs are often described as energetic and dramatic since they are always full of life, enthusiasm and action. They are also independent and bold judging by their affinity for leading and taking initiative. One of the biggest obstacles faced by Fire signs is their lack of deliberation, which means they can be impulsive and rush into things without foreseeing ahead. Some celebrities are born under these signs such as President Barack Obama (August 4th) or actor Jackie Chan (April 7th).

Following the signs aforementioned, Cancer; Scorpio and Pisces are included under the Water element. Water signs are believed to be the most sensitive and emotional of the 4 elements. Their kindness, empathy and willingness to help are considered to be a valuable addition to their personality. A number of people fall under these signs like legendary football player Pele (October 23rd); singer Selena Gomez (July 22nd) or actress Millie Bobby Brown (February 19th). The Water element is deeply involved in the realms of emotions, intuition and subconscious. Thus, they play an important role in shaping our knowledge of human experience, offering insights into the depths of the human psyche, and the cruciality of emotional intelligence.

The next element is the Earth element including Taurus, Capricorn and Virgo. Individually speaking, these three signs have their own traits. However, generally, Taurus, Capricorn and Virgo are as hardworking and loyal as they come. They are consistent and like to stick to their routines, especially Tauruses. Virgos have an artistic personality, always ready to come up with something unconventional rather than following popular paths. For Capricorns, they are quite frugal in the way they live and don't believe in waste. It's also in Capricorns' nature that they like to keep things steady similar to Tauruses.

Finally, the last 3 signs, which are Libra, Aquarius and Gemini will be automatically placed into the Air element. They are primarily well-known for their curiosity and adaptability, along with their desire for harmony and communication. Many leaders, for instance, Donald Trump (June 14th), Vladimir Putin (October 7th), and Volodymyr Zelenskyy (January 25th) have these signs. Air signs have the tendency to be intellectual and analytical, and they are usually easy-going. They are always ready to spark a conversation between people they have never met and they are often the first to think of an intriguing idea.



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While there is no accurate scientific evidence that zodiac signs directly shape personalities, fates or relationships, they can still be meaningful as a way to reflect. Mainly formulated based on symbolism, traditions, and human interpretation, the 12 zodiac signs are thought to be believable for people who count upon astrology for their daily activities.

*In conclusion, whether approached as a spiritual guide, a cultural tradition or simple harmless fun, astrology remains a powerful reminder of humanity's enduring desire to seek meaning in the stars.*

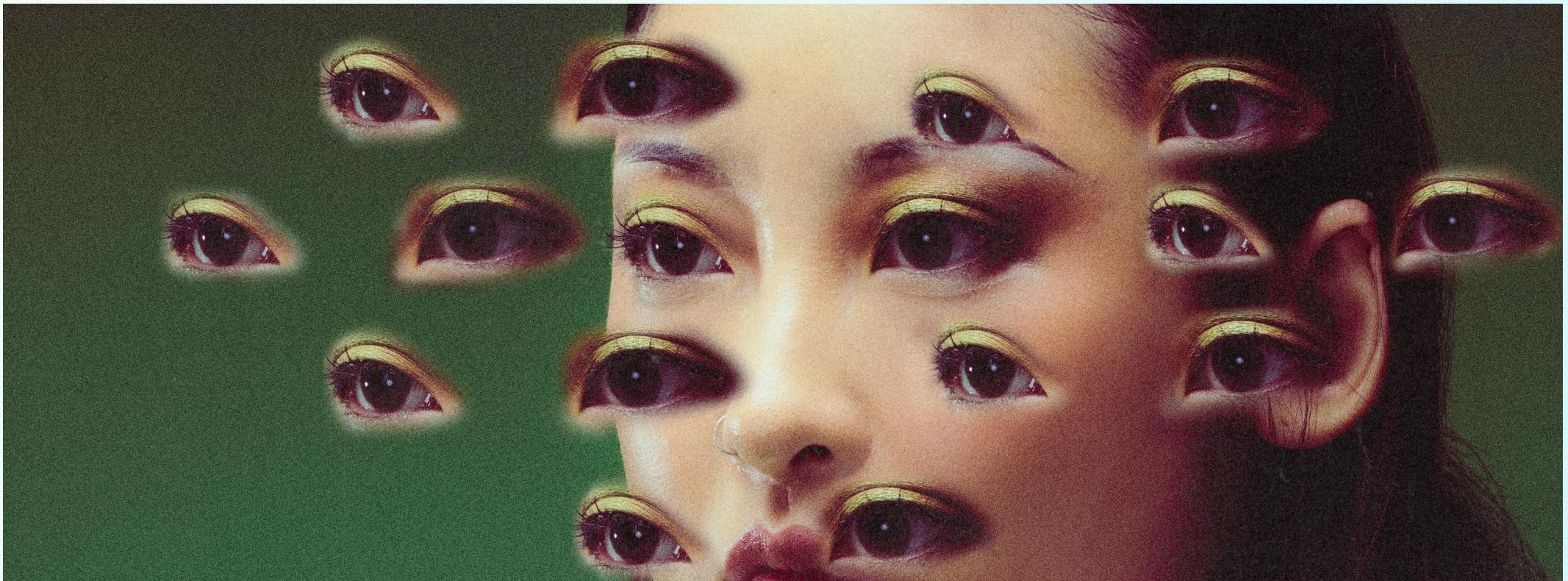
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## DEBUNKING SCHIZOPHRENIA: A DISORDER RIDDLED WITH MYTH

Chau Do Minh



As mental health awareness grows, conversations around anxiety and depression have become more open. Schizophrenia, however, remains shrouded in fear and myth—despite being no less real, and no less treatable than them. Myths about danger, violence, and “split personalities” haunt our world to this day, leading to social stigma that prevents individuals from seeking professional help.

***Experts say that misinformation about schizophrenia not only distorts public perception but can also be detrimental to schizophrenics.***

They often face discrimination in housing, employment, social circles, and even accessing medical care, on the grounds that they are “violent” or “unreliable”, or even “possess multiple personalities”. With over 24 million people worldwide living with schizophrenia, mental health advocates argue that the truth must be brought to light. This article examines some of the persistent misconceptions and what science actually tells us about this disorder.

For decades, schizophrenia has been confused with dissociative identity disorder (DID). This belief has only been reinforced by every form of media, from social media messages and false infographics to horror films and crime dramas. However, DID and schizophrenia are different disorders, albeit very easily confused. Those suffering from both disorders hear voices and appear emotionally unstable, but these symptoms originate from distinct sources. For DID, they may seem to be coming from another entity inside one’s head, called an *alter* or *headmate*, that may attempt to talk to or pass messages along to the *host*, or the original entity, who interprets these messages as real voices coming from other people. For schizophrenia, though, voices come from auditory hallucinations, where voices command or comment on the person’s actions. Emotional instability can come from *switching* in DID, where the entity controlling the host’s body changes, causing potential breakdowns or confusion. In contrast, individuals with schizophrenia usually have difficulty organizing their thoughts and may act impulsively, resulting in difficulty focusing, illogical reasoning and tangential speech.

As medical expert Amy Morin puts it, “Schizophrenia is a condition marked by disturbances in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Dissociative disorders are characterized by problems with the continuity of memories, thoughts, identity, and actions that result in a disconnection from reality.”[1] She also emphasizes the importance of differentiating between these mental disorders to ensure the correct and timely treatment of schizophrenia.

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***This stereotype fuels stigma, social isolation, and discrimination, making it harder for the individual to receive employment, housing, or community social and financial support. It also discourages people from seeking help due to fear of judgment.***

Another persistent myth suggests that schizophrenic individuals are emotionally flat, incapable of empathy, or inherently psychopathic. Popular media can exaggerate these traits, portraying characters with schizophrenia-spectrum disorders as cold, detached, and, at times, dangerously indifferent to others. While schizophrenia can affect emotional expression, it does not make someone psychopathic. Reduced or inappropriate expressions are part of a group of negative symptoms seen in schizophrenia, called the blunted effect. Dr Timothy Legg and educator Rebecca Joy write, "Some people with schizophrenia report they still experience a wide range of emotions, but they may not show those emotions in the form of facial expressions." [5]

Believing that schizophrenic patients are emotionless, cold, or cannot control their emotional state can exacerbate existing social problems, most notably the public avoiding, fearing, or expressing hatred towards these individuals, even instilling prejudices in children. Misunderstandings can harm social relationships, particularly if others assume the individual is indifferent or unwilling to engage. Other problems may breed, resulting in not being able to integrate into the workplace or get access to supportive services. Individuals may even feel alienated from their own emotions, contributing to frustration, low self-esteem, or depression.

As society becomes increasingly aware of mental health, it is crucial to bring the reality of schizophrenia into the public eye to challenge discrimination, separate fact from fiction, and promote understanding. Through this, we can help create a safer, compassionate world for those with schizophrenia and inform neurotypicals of the difficulties schizophrenia brings to one's life.

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## THE DIGITAL THREAD: ARE WE MORE CONNECTED, OR JUST ONLINE?

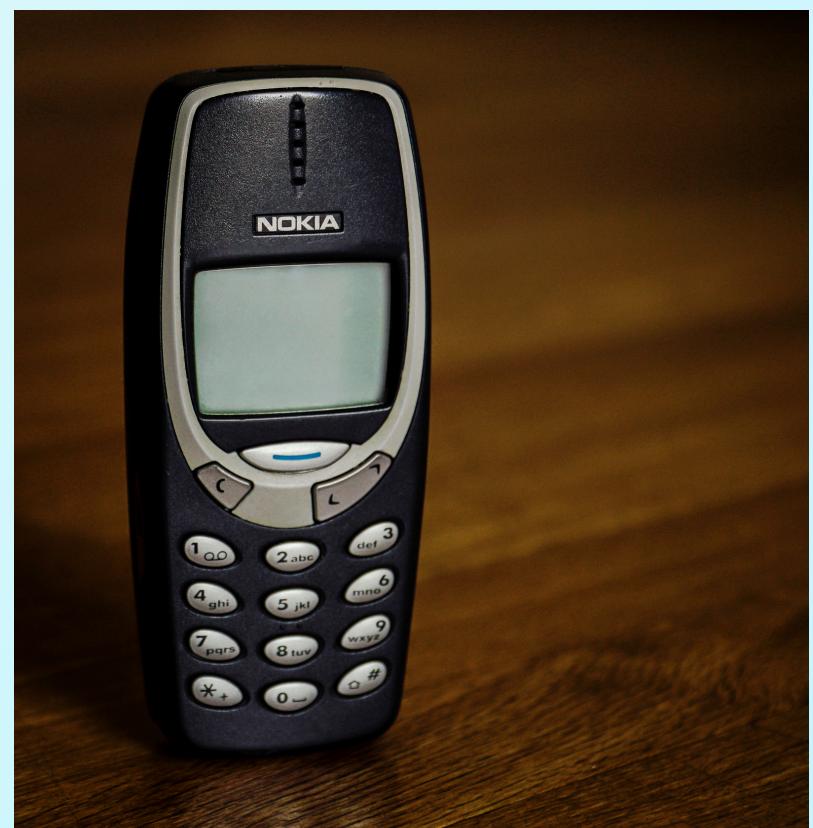
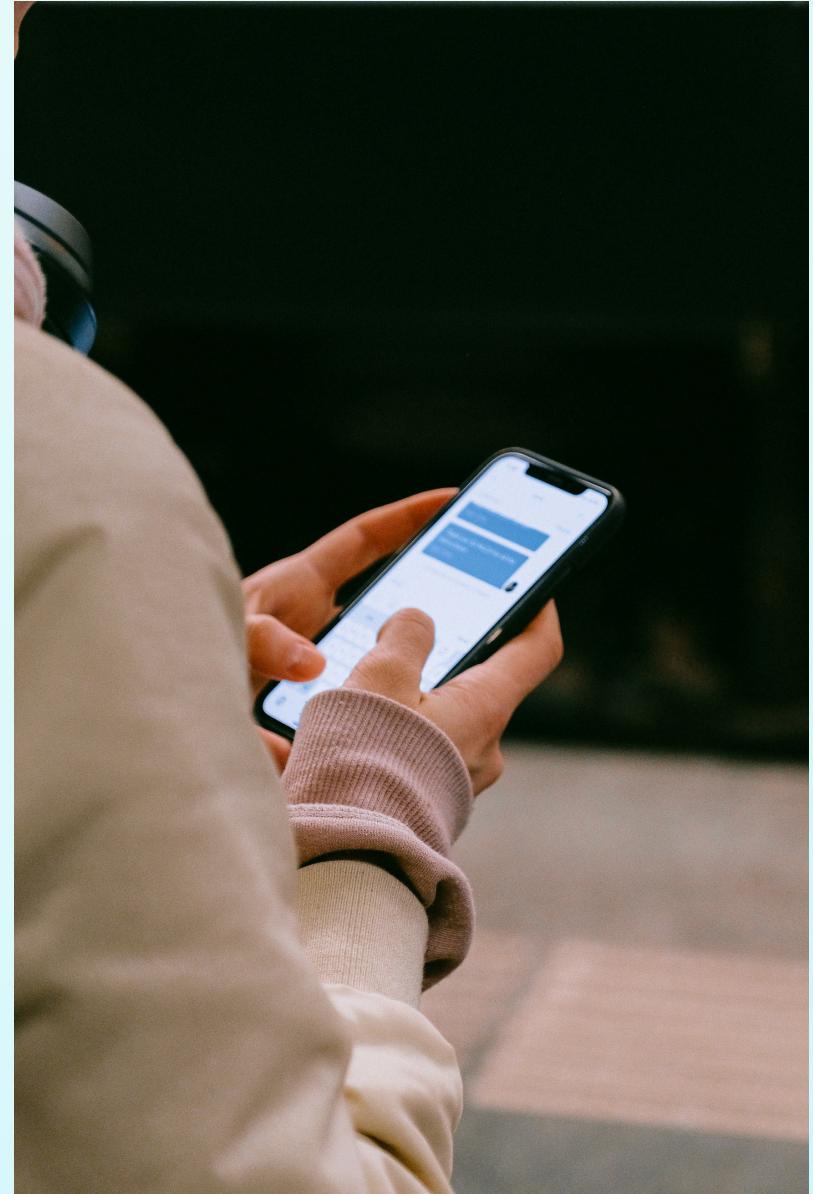
Anh Thai Bao

**P**rofessor Sherry Turkle once said, "We expect more from technology and less from each other." We created technology to provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship."

Today, many of us, from kids to adults, find ourselves glued to our phones or computer screens, sending billions of texts. But how many real people do we actually meet? Are we connecting with friends through real-life events, or are we simply engaging in group chats on Messenger? Group chats have become a familiar way for people to communicate, especially since around 80-90% of individuals worldwide spend most of their time at home. A survey found that 94% of people frequently carry their smartphones, and approximately 94.5% of global internet users access chat and instant messaging apps on a monthly basis. This raises a concern: is the genuine human connection fading and becoming invisible, while everything left behind is just an online thread?

Looking back and comparing life to the Stone Age, when we used letters, mailmen, and pigeons to send messages, we see how our methods of communication evolved. We moved from landlines to social media and instant messaging. The first text was sent on December 3, 1992, by Neil Papworth, a developer at Sema Group Telecom. In 1993, Nokia was the first handset manufacturer to support user-to-user SMS text messaging in its GSM phone line. By 1997, it had produced the first mobile phone with a full keyboard, the Nokia 9000i Communicator. As we can see in 2025, phones originally designed for calling and texting now offer extensive online capabilities. This convenience is undeniable, but are we abusing it? Are we becoming lazy about stepping out into the sunlight to meet others? Even when we do go out, we might prefer to hide in a coffee shop, texting friends instead of meeting them face-to-face. People spend more time online than offline due to accessibility and entertainment value. While the costs of meeting others such as transportation and expenses may deter some, there is little difference between texting or video calling and having a real conversation.

The benefits of chatting online, on the other hand, are still considerable. By connecting on the internet, we are able to promote global communication and foster positive relationships. The use of social media facilitates communication across distances, allowing family, friends, and communities to interact. Shy people can gain confidence through online interactions. Information sharing has become easier than ever; we can exchange a variety of types of information without having to write or print anything. Through social media, we can also participate in online support systems, engage in activism, and share experiences, which proved particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises, helping people stay connected and maintain a positive outlook.



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However, It can be challenging to consider people we've only met online as true friends. The ability to interact face-to-face allows us to see a person's true personality, body language, and tone, all of which build trust and reduce misunderstandings. UCLA Professor Albert Mehrabian estimates that 93% of communication is nonverbal, through gestures or expressions that texts don't have; this demonstrates how much is lost when we rely only on texts or screens. Emotions are also better expressed and connected in person. According to a study from the University of Chicago, people felt more understood and connected during face-to-face conversations than they did during digital discussions. Community events and group activities are also more engaging because they involve genuine human interaction. A Stanford study found that in-person teams produced 30% more creative ideas than virtual teams when brainstorming and making decisions. Moreover, spending too much time online may increase stress and anxiety. As reported by The Indian Express, phone conversations over 30 minutes a week were linked to higher blood pressure, while a 2023 meta-analysis connected excess screen time with increased anxiety and social withdrawal, especially among young people.

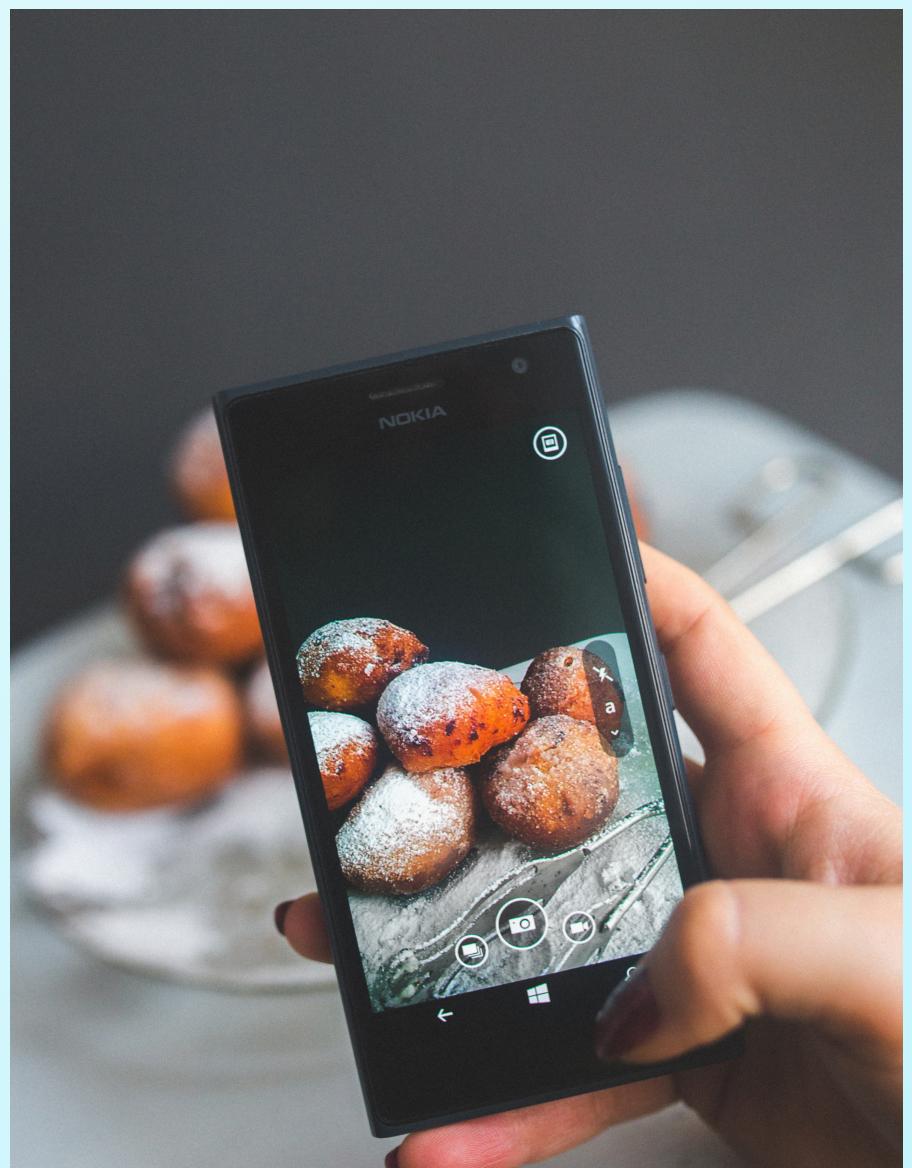
***Social media has become a part of everyday life for young people in the Gen Z and millennial generations.***

Using social media interaction as a method of healing, a depressed person tried to get in touch with a friend. Gradually, the friend started to promise to meet and talk as they became closer because of shared interests, conversation styles, and many other things. This depressed person became more confident and happier thanks to online interaction, without overusing the internet. This shows that there can be a balance to using social media and connecting with the real world.

In conclusion, the digital age has certainly expanded our ability to reach others, but it has also blurred the line between interaction and true connection. While we connect, it often tends to be superficial; heart emojis instead of genuine empathy, brief notifications instead of meaningful conversations. So should we even ask if we are truly connected? It seems that the more pertinent question is: what kind of connection are we actually building? In a world filled with instant messaging and divided attention, it is not the act of connecting that defines us, but the depth of our connections through social media.

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## PROTECTING OUR CREATIVITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW FOR CONTENT CREATORS

Dorinda Atitsogbui

### **I**ntroduction

In this rapidly evolving digital age, content creation is no longer just a hobby but a secure source of income for people all over the world. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, have made it easier now more than ever for people to share their creativity with the world, sometimes going viral overnight with just one post. But while it's easy to post content, it's just as easy for someone to steal it. That's where Intellectual Property (IP) Law steps in. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) defines intellectual property as creations of the mind such as inventions: literary and artistic works, designs, symbols, names and images used in commerce. IP Law mainly seeks to strike a balance between fostering innovation and protecting the rights of inventors and creators.

### **IP Right Protections: Copyrights, Trademarks, Patents and Trade Secrets**

One of the most common IP protections for creators is copyright. Copyright gives you the right to decide how your work is shared, used or sold. It protects literary and artistic work and lasts for the creator's whole lifetime as well as up to seventy years after their death. An important thing to note is that a creator is a person who makes the IP asset such as art or literary work, while an owner is a person who has the right to copy and distribute the work. A person can be both the creator and owner of a work, and a creator may also give another person ownership of a work.

While copyright focuses on actual content, trademarks protect brand identity such as names, logos, or slogans, and prevent others from using them. For instance, the name 'Nike' and its corresponding logo are both trademarked and not available for other fitness brands to use.

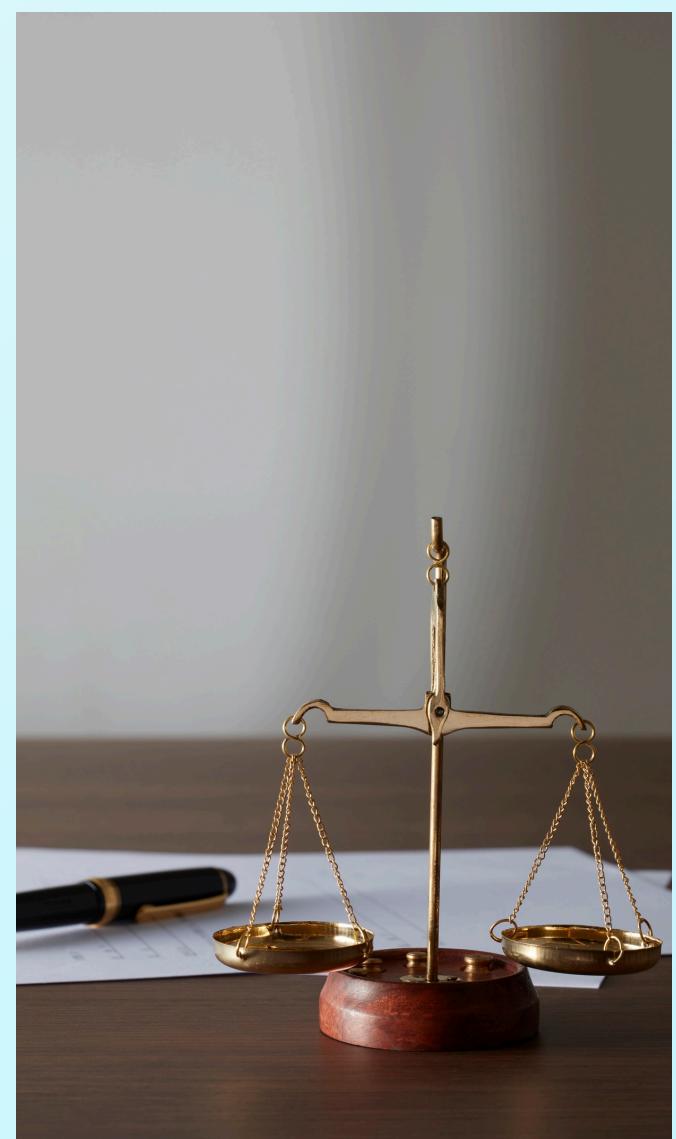
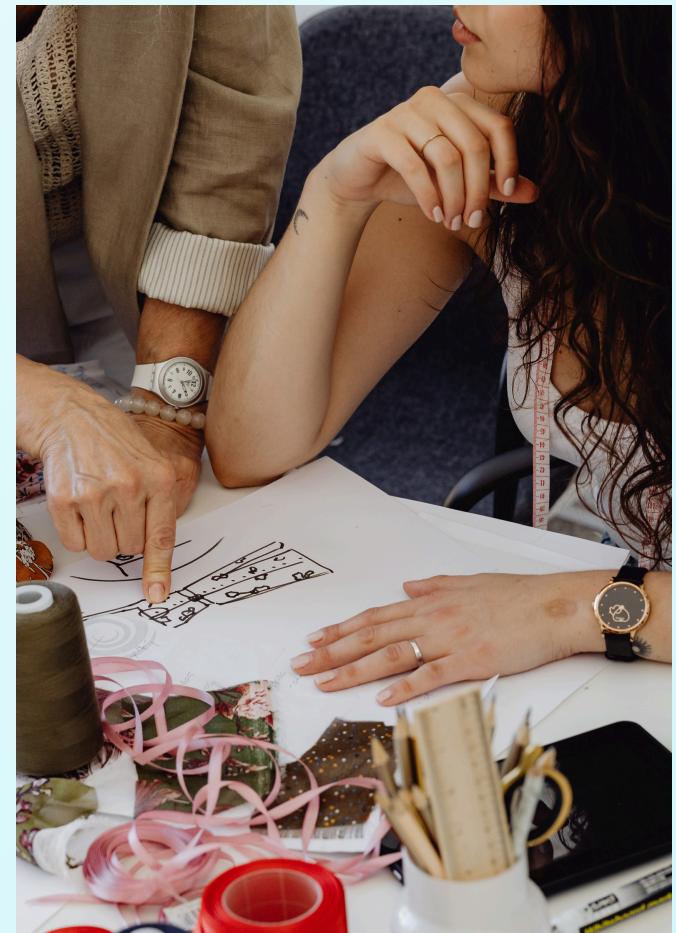
Patents on the other hand deal with inventions and new forms of technology. Patents give creators the right to stop others from making, using or selling their work without permission.

Lastly, trade secrets cover confidential information used by businesses. A good example is KFC's special recipe of eleven herbs and spices, which is still shrouded in mystery and known by only a few people in the company. The Coca-Cola company has also kept their formula a closely guarded secret for years, and the algorithms for companies like Google and Amazon have been listed as some of the most famous examples of trade secrets to this day.

### **Why IP Law Matters to Content Creators**

Imagine spending hours creating a video, only for a bigger creator to re-post it without permission or credit. It happens all the time, and sometimes even large corporations stoop that low. Take Shein, the fast fashion giant. Shein is notorious for stealing artist's work, from illustrations to clothing designs, and mass producing them without permission. Entrepreneur and digital creator CasseyHo, founder of the fitness clothing brand Blogilates, has repeatedly accused Shein of stealing her clothing designs. She's taken to her blog to openly express her frustration, writing: "Shein is at it again, stealing designs without making the slightest effort to hide what they're doing."

Situations like this are exactly why digital creators need to be aware of their IP rights. If you don't know your rights, you might not even realize what protection you have.



## PROTECTING OUR CREATIVITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW FOR CONTENT CREATORS

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### The Fallout: The Over-extension of IP Law

The increasing reliance on IP protections has also generated some controversies, and in 2024 and 2025 alone we've already seen huge high-profile cases involving content creators taking legal action for IP infringement. Influencer Sydney Nicole Gifford filed a suit against her rival Alyssa Sheil for 'stealing her aesthetic' in the aptly named 'sad beige' case, and Kelly Heyer sued Roblox over its use of her viral 'apple dance' as an emote. In some cases, creators have even attempted to assert rights over overly broad concepts, and the most infamous example of this was when the React Brothers tried to trademark the terms 'YouTubers React', 'Teens React', and 'Kids React' and even the word 'react' itself. This was met with backlash from the YouTube community since many other content creators make similar reaction videos and use the word 'react' in their videos. Even TV show hosts such as Ellen DeGeneres, Jimmy Kimmel and James Corden have used the reaction format in their shows. However, the React Brothers claimed that other YouTube videos would be infringing on their intellectual property by making 'react' videos, and they quickly lost 300,000 subscribers as a result. These controversies highlight the thin line between intellectual property, property protection, and blatant attempts to monopolize expressions that belong in the public domain.

***Digital creators need to understand that while IP law is meant to safeguard creators' work, its over-extension can diminish the very creativity that it is meant to protect.***

### Conclusion

At the end of the day, having a grasp of IP rights isn't just meant for huge corporations and companies; it's meant for anyone who's ever uploaded a post, created a brand, designed illustrations and clothes, and so much more. Intellectual Property law provides the legal framework to address intangible asset challenges by balancing the protection of creators' rights with the promotion of innovation.

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## STILLNESS ON SCREEN: THE RISE OF SLOW CINEMA IN EAST ASIA

DŨNG NGUYỄN

### Introduction

“Slow cinema” is a phrase used to describe a recent art-film movement based on minimal, contemplative narrative. As Paul Schrader noted, directors like Robert Bresson and Yasujiro Ozu were once seen as “slow” film directors, but their films are mild compared with the later multi-hour epics by Lav Diaz or Béla Tarr. Schrader writes that, once “Gilles Deleuze ‘happened’ to” cinema and Tarkovsky came along, what had started as 1950s art-house cinema “blossomed into the hydra-headed creature we call slow cinema”.

No region has been influenced more by this sentiment than East Asia. Directors in Japan (Yasujiro Ozu), China (Tsai Ming-liang, Jia Zhangke) and Taiwan (Hou Hsiao-hsien) have honed a cinema of stillness that runs at its own speed. Drawing from Zen quietude, Confucian sensibilities, and Taoist notions of natural time, these auteurs craft a poetry of patience. Every lingering shot is a held breath of thought, pulling the viewer into a meditative state. The result is a body of work close to painterly: long, composed framings in which the characters move in and out of the frames as if they were walking through a canvas.

***In this regard, East Asian slow cinema does more than push back against the relentless pace of modern media culture: it provides a mediation where time turns into the subject of art.***

### Key Films: Visual Stillness and Soundscapes

A characteristic of slow cinema is the unyielding, “pensive” gaze of the cinema, and Tsai Ming-liang’s *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (2003) is a paradigmatic example. Set during the final night of an aging Taipei movie theater, the film makes the cinema itself the central character. The handful of patrons and staff drift like ghosts through its dark corridors, while Tsai’s camera lingers for minutes at a time in dim, near-empty spaces. As film scholar Lutz Koepnick observes, “the relentless star of Tsai’s camera... evokes... the presence of an absence, the riddle of a lack that drives time forward”. In one famed shot, the lens glances over a curtain at the rear of the theater to reveal two lone ticket-vendors (one dozing) in an almost pitch-black space; the frame is held for so long that the faintest sounds—a cough, a rustle, the distant footsteps of a latecomer—assume uncanny weight.

By contrast, Ozu’s *Tokyo Story* (1953) uses a similar stillness in a domestic setting. Ozu’s camera is famously static, framing characters in horizontal shots that favor empty space. Extended takes of family conversations are shown with minimal editing—many scenes play out in one unbroken take. Even off-screen action (like an uncle silently reading the newspaper off-camera) is only shown through dialogue, flattening time. The soundscape is likewise pared down: ambient room tone often prevails and music cues (such as the film’s sad theme when Tomi dies) are sparse. In one late scene, Noriko Hirayama (Setsuko Hara) falls beside the bath after she returns her father’s watch. Ozu lingers on her in a held shot until it becomes almost unbearably still; the only sounds are her stifled sobbing and the faint creak of the wooden bathing platform.

### Timelessness in Eastern Thought

Why do these films opt for stillness? Much of the reason lies in philosophy. Japanese and Chinese culture have for centuries sought eternity in the moment, and Ozu’s films are attuned to both Buddhist and Confucian sympathies. In Charles Hayford’s view, his focus on ritual and obligation is a nod to Confucian family hierarchy that spans generations. In contrast, Ozu’s serene compositions remind one of Zen art: each shot a harmonious whole, each frame a reflective stop. Tsai Ming-liang pushes this reflective impulse to the limit. As Teng-Kuan Ng describes, his static imagery “parallels... the liberative visual aesthetics of Zen”, turning the still frame into a form of ritual act. In both directors, intimate home scenes evoke the Zen concept of ma (negative space), where space and silence are not voids but intervals of presence.



## STILLNESS ON SCREEN: THE RISE OF SLOW CINEMA IN EAST ASIA

DŨNG NGUYỄN

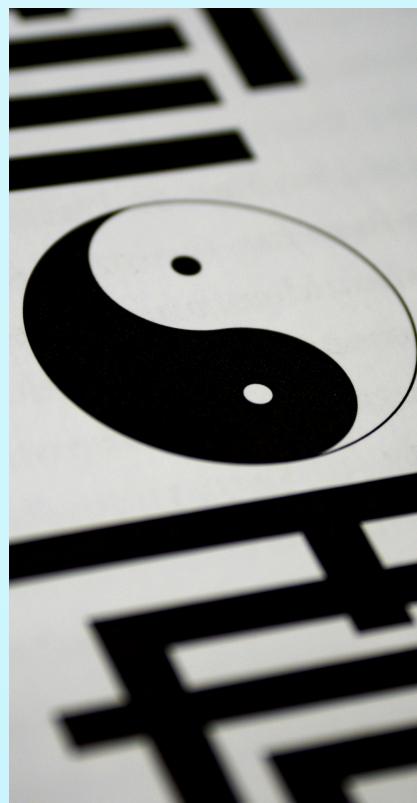
Confucian thought also grounds this East Asian slow tempo. Long-take realism in China aligns with Confucian interest in *li* ("proper conduct") and *ren* (benevolence): ethics based on the rhythms of everyday life and social peace. As Wanqiu Ren describes, Confucian aesthetics "put emphasis on the social virtues of 'benevolence' and 'propriety'" and focus on depicting actual life. Chinese filmmakers influenced by Confucianism have used long shots to "extend... time and space realism, and dissect and introduce complex social panoramas". Hou Hsiao-hsien's rural family dramas (e.g. *Dust in the Wind*, 1986) and Jia Zhangke's social-realist works (e.g. *Still Life*, 2006) exemplifies this, calmly watching over people in the midst of larger social turmoil. Actually, Jia Zhangke's *Xiao Wu* (1997) employs fixed, panoramic shots as a Daoist-infused alternative: rather than actively guiding our attention, the camera inaction (無爲) lets the world unfold. As Ren points out, under Taoist influence Chinese slow cinema adopts "fixed camera position panoramic long shots" in order to reflect harmonious coexistence with nature. The result is a visual style that resembles classical Chinese painting or poetry: extended glimpses of submerged topography (*Still Life*), rugged peasants strolling, riverboat scene drifting (as in Wang Bing's documentaries)—all suggestions of Daoist serenity and the endless dynamism of nature.

### Counterculture and Context

Finally, East Asian slow cinema is also an implied counter cultural critique of globalization and urban life. Koepnick indicates filmmakers in East Asia not only flee speed; rather they "deploy slowness... not as a means to flee from the vertiginous speed of... societal changes but as a vehicle through which to confront and make sense of these processes". For Koepnick, the wide acceptance of slow style in recent decades is "a transnational body of work" that uses extended duration to probe "the co-presence of multiple temporalities and speeds" of our times. East Asian filmmakers have thus shown that stillness in frame is not simply aesthetic elegance; it is a way of thinking, feeling, and holding out against an increasingly fast-paced era.

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## HEALTHCARE ETHICS: THE DARKER SIDE OF THE MEDICAL INDUSTRY

Nam Phuong Vo

**T**his doctor just stole a patient's organs!"

"That pharmacist intentionally prescribed a lower dose so the illness would recur and the patient would return..."

Many news headlines like these terrify people because they reveal a dark side of the medical industry - a "sacred profession" that supposedly saves lives. Medical ethics is a core foundation relevant to this view; it is a set of rules and orientations about the characters and virtues that those who work to protect human health have to comply with. We know of noble practitioners: frontline workers coping with pandemic days and nights, or staff who give up holidays to protect public health. Yet behind the dim lights of operating rooms, deep beneath the sounds of devices, hidden within IV drips, there also exist bad scenarios, and sometimes even distorted realities.

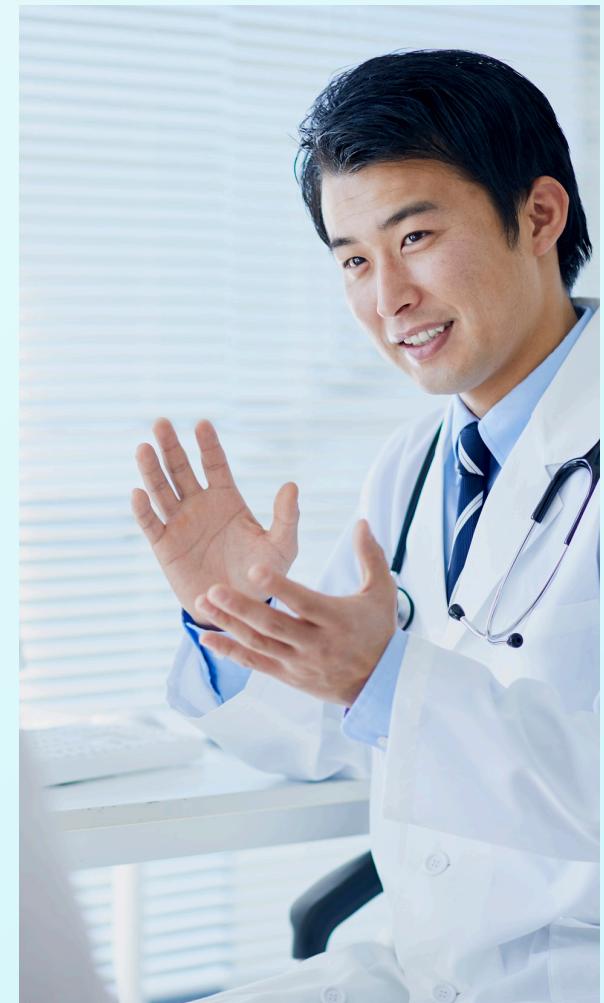
**How can we tell the odd one out among the kind and dedicated people, the one who would make a significant negative difference?**

### Horrifying Cases and Serious Offences

These cases below reflect corrupted values within medical practice, and even further, against human rights. When discussing this issue, we are likely to think about the term "angel of mercy" or "angel of death", which refers to criminals who commit their harm or murders under the uniforms of medical practitioners or caregivers. One example is Harold Shipman, a British doctor who murdered about 250 of his patients. In most cases, he injected a fatal dose of diamorphine (a painkiller) into victims. Or the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele was one of history's most evil physicians. Served within the Nazi Party and was an SS officer during WWII, he killed and tortured hundreds, mostly Jewish prisoners, at the Auschwitz concentration camp in his medical experiments. He starved people to observe time to death, injected chemicals into eyes to attempt colour changes, killed for pleasure, etc. It is hard to believe that the "white blouse angels" who promised to heal others then turned to killing. But it is not just those rare cases that matter.

### Consent Issue

The negative side of medicine extends beyond obvious crimes to those that merely serve practitioners' interests. Although not as extreme as the previous examples, these actions still violate medical ethics. One area that could be looked at is whether patients truly understand what they are consenting to. Medical practitioners can influence decisions, especially when a patient's life is hanging by a thread, doctors are the saviours. When driven by personal profit, some doctors recommend more expensive, riskier procedures to patients who do not fully understand but trust the physician's expertise. Looking at the St. Joseph's Stent Scandal, they implemented coronary stents to 369 heart patients, which were not medically necessary, exposing them to greater risk. However, the decision-making process can be controversial in a way that, in some cases, doctors can detect decision-making incapacity in only 42% of patients, versus formal assessments, meaning that some patients can make false choices regarding their treatments. Family members, who are not fully aware of the medical condition, can also influence vulnerable patients' decisions. These, are challenges presented to caregivers, but obviously, it is not justifiable for medical malpractice or overtreatment.



## HEALTHCARE ETHICS: THE DARKER SIDE OF THE MEDICAL INDUSTRY

Nam Phuong Vo

### Less Discussed Aspects

Moreover, some aspects might be overlooked, and actually could lead to larger issues if not addressed. One could be poor transparency, weak supervision and insufficient regulations in healthcare institutions and authorities. Some private clinics could violate rules and get away with it if there is a lack of enforcement. In 2013, a Vietnamese plastic surgeon, Nguyễn Mạnh Tường, illegally disposed the body of a customer who died after a surgery. His private clinic then turned out to be possibly unlicensed. This case sparked public outrage because of the poor systematic monitoring, especially when dealing with private clinics. Another event is when Purdue Pharma highly marketed OxyContin as a safe substance that can cure all kinds of pain, while it actually causes addiction, and it contributed greatly to the opioid crisis in the U.S. The result was both a medical and social issue, highlighting that when healthcare businesses prioritize revenue, there will be very destructive consequences.

### Motivations Behind Unethical Medical Actions

Motivations for murderous or harmful behaviour are varied. Some are psychological problems, such as sadism, where the criminals believe they are in a position of power and can control victims' health or lives. Other common motives include money, personal gain, or promotion. Moreover, in Nguyễn Mạnh Tường's case, weak supervision and regulation were contributing factors. Some cases reflect wider social contexts, such as with Josef Mengele in Germany during the Holocaust, where he was likely to develop hatred towards other ethnicities.

### Moving Forward and Building a More Ethical System

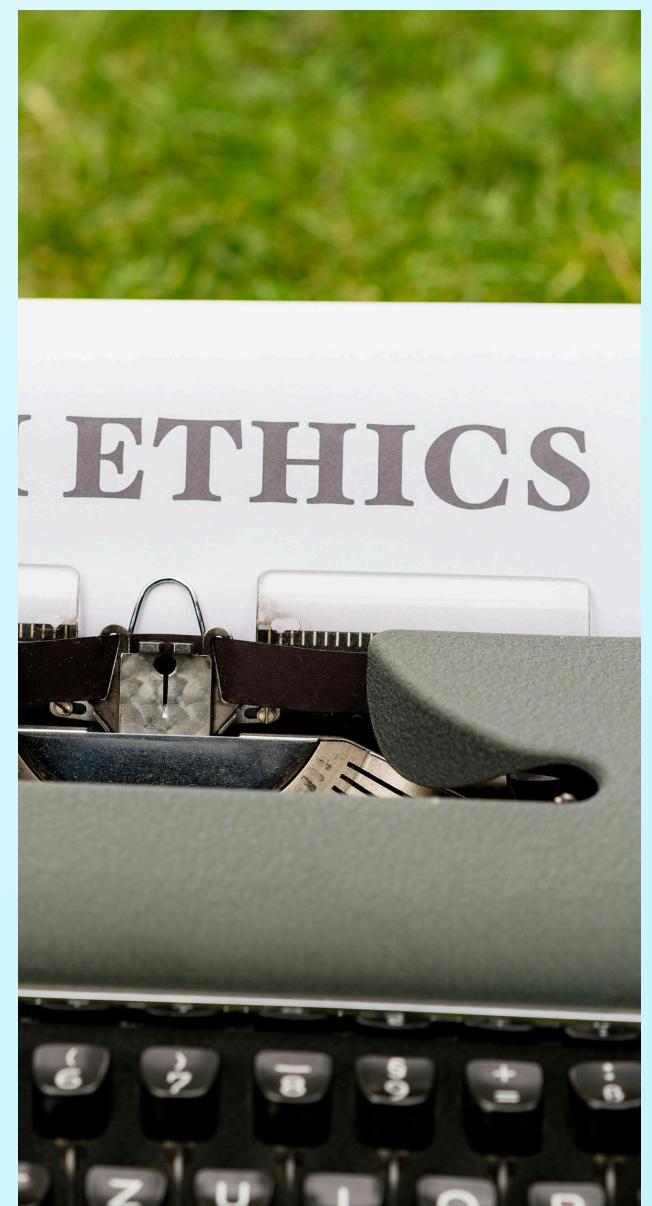
Actions need to be taken to ensure a better ethical system in the healthcare industry. Firstly, doctors must assess and ensure patients' decision-making capability, then inform and ensure they understand options while minimizing communication barriers, such as language. Next, medical bodies have to prevent self-interested behaviour early through punishments, regular inspections and investigations. Additionally, caregivers' physical and mental health should be checked periodically. Authorities such as the Ministries of Health should also enforce national health policies, provide stricter regulations on hospitals, pharmacies and clinics; local authorities can implement standards and transparency, while also supporting medical funding and reducing workforce shortages to lessen potential corruption that is tied to low payments. Most importantly, schools should enhance ethics education in the medical fields, combining practical training and psychological health assessments. Taken together, these steps aim to detect, prevent and punish wrong behaviours, support the well-being of healthcare workers and patients, and thus further develop or restore public trust.

### Conclusion

Undoubtedly, every field has dark sides, yet ethics must always serve as a compass, especially in medicine. Governments, hospitals and practitioners must share a collective responsibility to comply with ethical values. Only through stronger oversight, better training, and support can we reduce harm and sustain the mission to heal.

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## HOW AI TOOLS ARE RESHAPING FINANCIAL DECISION-MAKING

Prasanna Chandankhede

### Introduction

Back in the day, financial literacy meant mastering basic concepts such as budgeting, calculating interest, saving, and managing debt. But as we transition into the digital and AI era, these skills look very different. Algorithms now decide how investments should be allocated, where investments should go, and how much investments should be made — all through new mobile apps and AI-powered chatbots that offer instant expert advice. While this transition brings both empowerment and new risks, it raises an important question:

***“What does it mean to be financially literate in the digital era?”***

### Basics to Algorithm

Traditional financial literacy required personal effort in order to get effective results. Individuals had to research investments, track expenses, and balance checkbooks all on their own. But, nowadays, budgeting apps and mobile apps with integrated AI features handle all the calculations and give recommendations. For the younger generation, this feels natural, but for millennials, not so much. Investopedia (2025) found that 41% of Millennials and Gen Z are comfortable with AI managing portfolios, compared with just 14% of Baby Boomers. While technology saves time and efforts, it risks turning financial literacy into pure dependence on these apps and bots.

### AI in Everyday Finance

Artificial intelligence has integrated itself in daily financial life. Budgeting apps like Mint track patterns and recommend adjustments. AI-advisors such as Betterment design customized portfolios, while AI-powered credit models are reshaping how borrowers are evaluated. Even payment systems now powered by algorithms, particularly Buy Now, Pay Later platforms that encourage spending while hiding long-term debt. The Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2024) has warned that while these tools help expand access, they also increase risks of overspending and fraud.

### Opportunities of AI Finance

We all know that AI offers clear benefits. First-time investors can now build diversified portfolios within minutes without needing expert advice or a finance degree. They can simply make decisions based on the recommendations from AI. Robo-advisors, now managing more than \$1.26 trillion globally (Barron's, 2025), have democratized access to financial planning. Personalized advice, which was once a privilege only for wealthy clients, is now easily available through apps to the general public as well. If used responsibly, these tools can broaden access to financial security and long-term stability.

### Risks and Pitfalls

Even with its advantages, technology remains a double-edged sword. Kiplinger (2025) reports that AI chatbots make mistakes about one-third of the time, yet nearly half of their users already rely on them. The issue here is that many people lack the financial knowledge to spot errors. Another issue that arises is Algorithmic Bias, as AI models can reinforce inequalities in lending. Generative AI tools, according to MoneyWeek (2025), often give inaccurate advice and lack transparency, raising regulatory questions. Moreover, fraudsters also exploit AI, creating deepfake scams and fake investments.



## FINANCE REVIEW

## HOW AI TOOLS ARE RESHAPING FINANCIAL DECISION-MAKING

Prasanna Chandankhede

### Redefining Financial Literacy

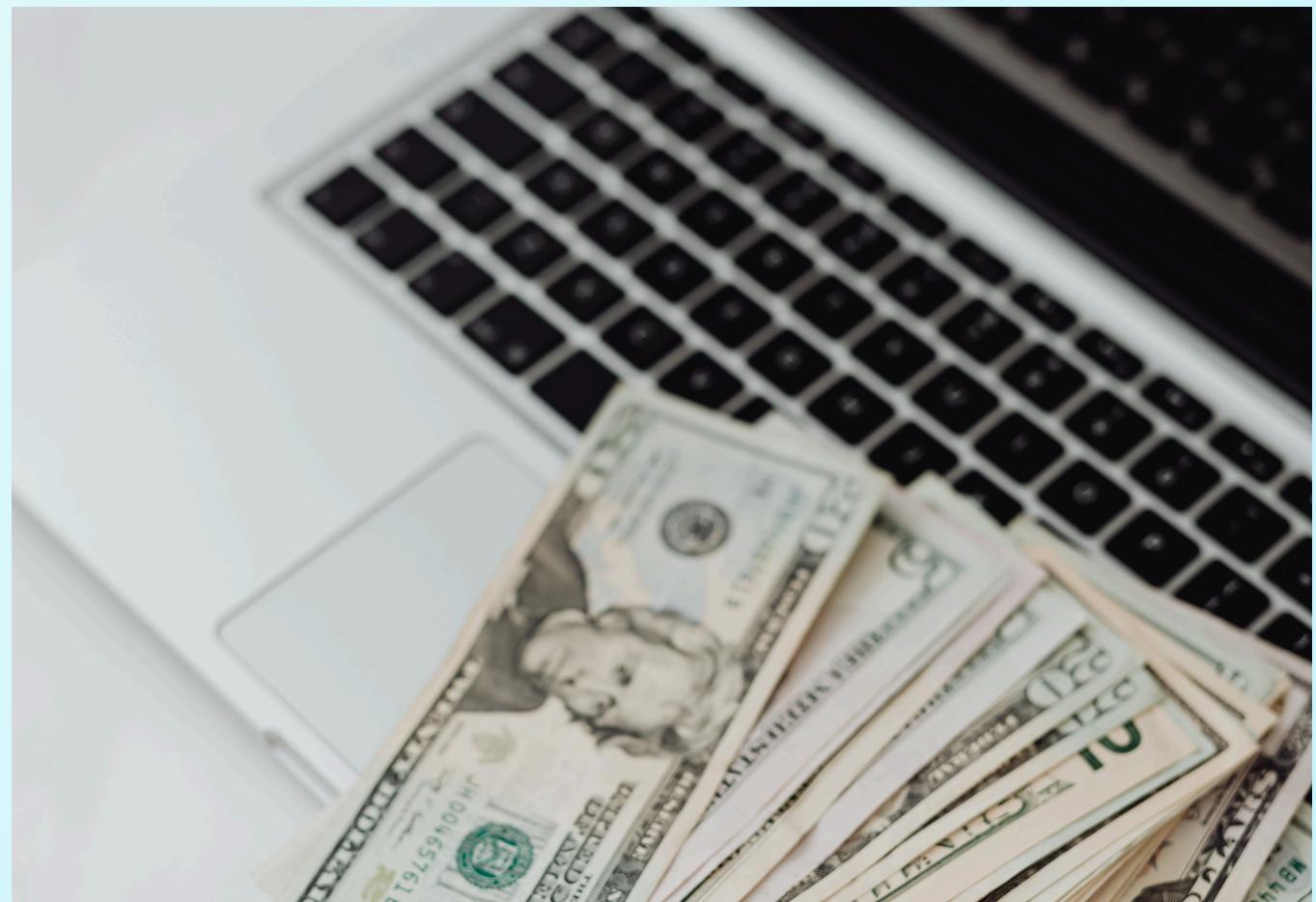
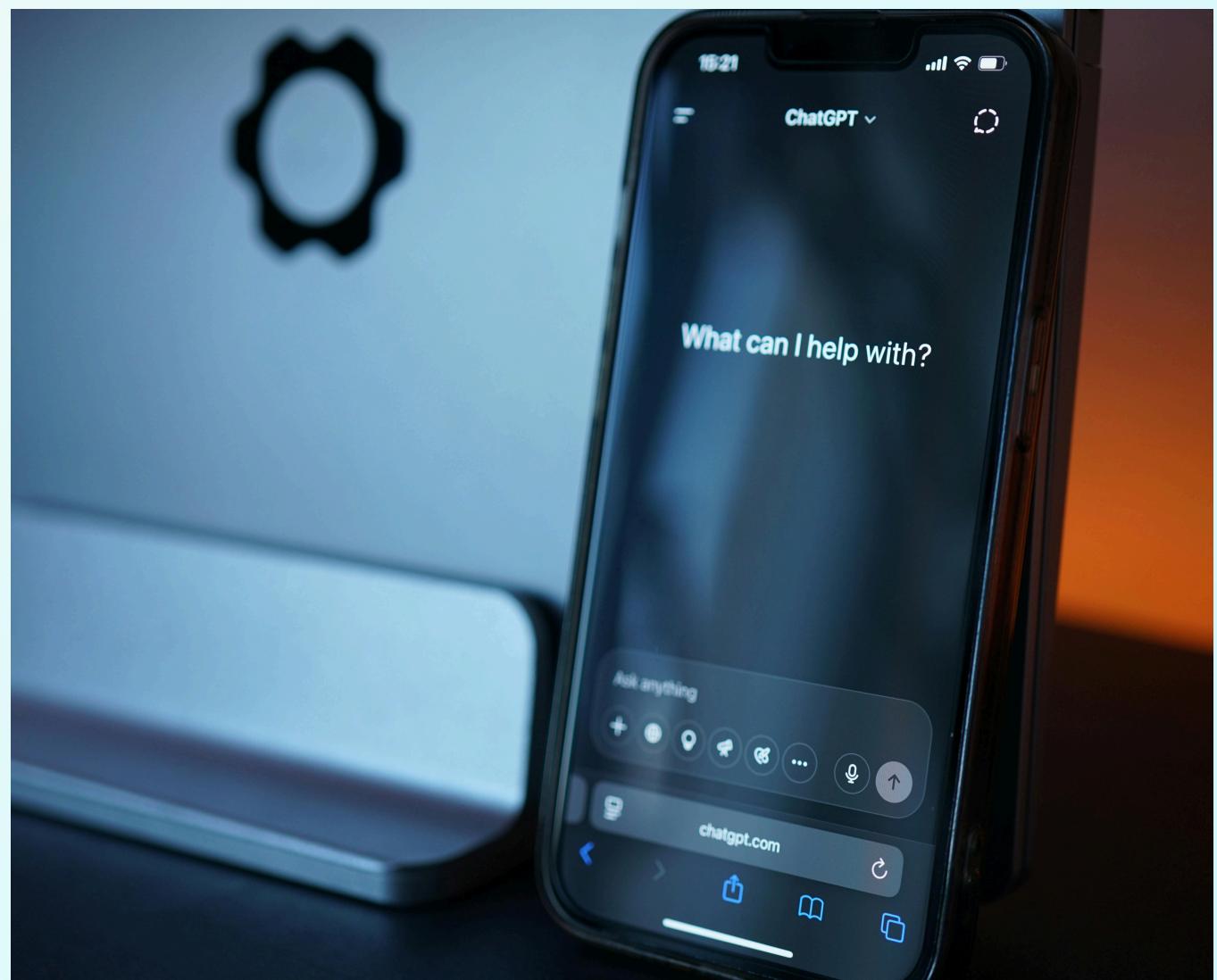
In today's world, the definition of financial literacy must expand. It no longer suffices to understand savings and debt but rather, people must also practice digital literacy. True literacy now involves knowing when to trust the algorithm, and when to rely on your own independent judgment.

### Conclusion

AI has revolutionized financial decision-making, enhancing accessibility, efficiency, and inclusion, but also introducing dependency, bias, and fraud. The wisest financial decision to make today may be knowing when and when not to let the algorithm decide.

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## ARE EXPENSIVE EGGS WORTH IT?

Khoa Võ



**E**ggs are a culinary staple, known for being one of the most versatile ingredients in any kitchen. Not only do they excel on their own in dishes like omelettes, they also act as an inextricable ingredient in recipes such as carbonara and shakshuka. However, there are diverse types of eggs in supermarkets and grocery stores, ranging from cheap and expensive options. This essay will discuss if expensive eggs are buying or not.

Most stores offer 4 types of eggs, each with their own categories. These types include: conventional, cage-free, free-range, and pasture-raised, with prices rising in that order. Firstly, let's dive deeper into what these categories mean.

Conventional eggs are laid by hens raised in battery cages and fed a fixed diet to maximize their egg production. Hens raised in conditions like these can produce anywhere from two hundred to three hundred eggs a year, the equivalent of one egg per day. Most eggs produced in the modern world still come from chickens raised in cages of some sort, though that is starting to change.

Cage-free eggs are eggs laid by hens that can roam freely in an open area, but that does not necessarily mean an outdoor environment. There are no strict regulations around the minimum space required per bird, so while these conditions are better for the chickens, it still is not the best condition for high-quality eggs.

However, things start to change with free-range eggs. Hens are required to have a minimum space of two square feet per bird, and they are also required to spend at least six hours outside daily. On free-range egg cartons, the label "Certified Humane" might also be present, and this is a designation from a non-profit organization that advocates for the welfare of farm animals.

The last category is pasture-raised eggs, which is considered the gold standard for animal welfare by the majority of people. These hens are obliged to live outside year-round with shelter for nighttime. Additionally, they are fed an organic diet, which means better quality meat. But does this higher standard of living actually affect the eggs?

### ***Now to our central question: Do expensive eggs taste better?***

Well, it depends on a few elements. The taste of food is influenced by multiple factors, including aroma, texture, sight, physical, and also the human element, which includes our expectations and emotions. The most influential element here is the human element, since taste can change due to the placebo effect that occurs when we perceive the food as humane or inhumane. Between conventional eggs and pasture-raised eggs, the nutrient differences are barely noticeable, so unless you eat an egg-heavy diet, it doesn't change anything. The main kicker is the labels on the carton. For example, if people see labels such as "certified humane", "pasture-raised", or "grass-fed", they might perceive it as tasting richer or fresher, despite the fact that they have not tasted it yet. Although textures vary, the taste between different types of eggs are basically the same, so saying expensive eggs taste better would be false. Really, much of what makes expensive eggs seem 'better' comes down to marketing strategies designed to alter consumers' perception.

In conclusion, eggs are versatile and can be utilized anywhere, so being informed about which kinds of eggs are the best to buy is quite important. Unlike other products, expensive eggs do not equal higher quality eggs. In the end, how you cook your eggs, and how you feel about them, matters more than the price tag.

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## GLOBAL DEBT TIMEBOMB AND THE YOUTH TAX

Ishan Sharma

**B**y 2030, fresh graduates may find their paychecks quietly drained by debts they did not incur. Global public debt has already surpassed \$100 trillion as of 2024 [1]. Every tax increase or service cut today basically becomes a "youth tax" - a levy on young workers to fund past expenditure. Economists caution that profligate deficits today could lead to hyperinflation and currency crises [2][3]. Indeed, according to American estimates, debt interest will exceed defense spending by 2025 [4], a sign of how servicing debt can consume substantial funds.

U.S. government debt stood at 99% of GDP in 2024[5]- near one dollar of debt for every dollar made. Europe and emerging economies also face similar issues. The IMF estimates world debt could reach 115% of GDP if things deteriorate [1]. As debt levels rise, so do interest costs. Economists from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) now think fiscal consolidation (tax or spending cuts) must happen quickly to avoid a crisis [6]. In real terms, this means more VAT, tighter government budgets, or heavier income taxes.

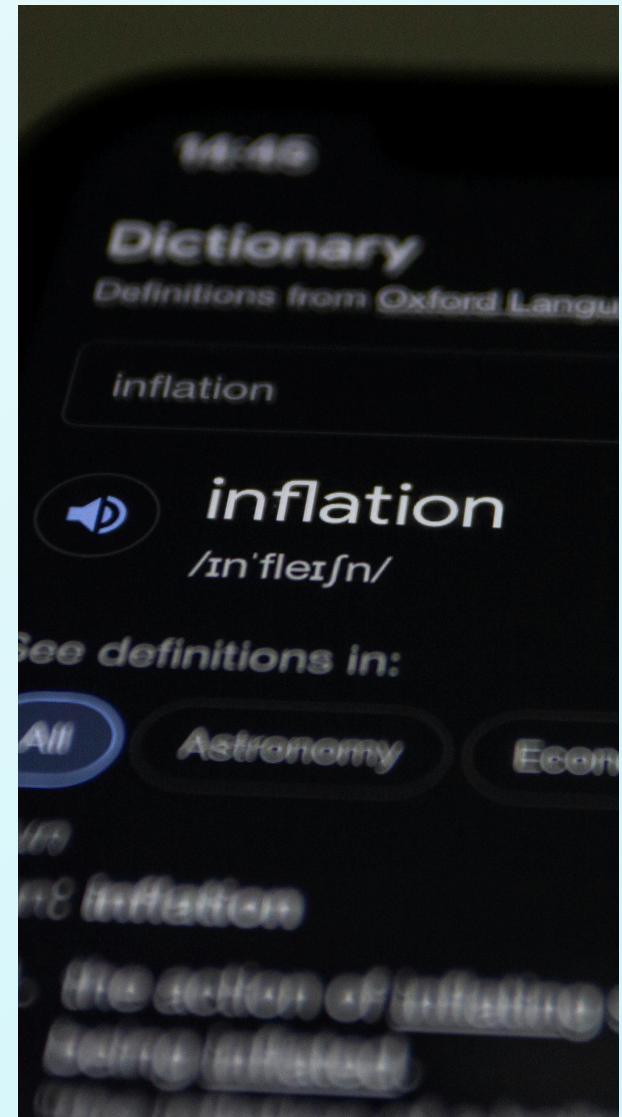
***With workforces declining in most high-debt countries, every new worker today bears an increased burden of debt.***

The very first tool of this sneaky tax is fiscal discipline. Governments raise taxes and lower spending because they are in debt. Unfortunately, education, training, and youth services are sacrificed first. For example, debt-ridden countries often impose higher VAT and cut school budgets after previous crises. The result is new graduates losing scholarship funding and apprenticeship opportunities if youth programs are eliminated. In practice, this means more fees, fewer training schemes, and undercapitalized state universities - in effect, a stealth tax on young people's future.

The second process is inflation. Permitting prices to rise pays off debt in real terms, but it comes at the expense of young employees. BIS analysis warns that "unrestrained public finances" make it harder to control inflation [3]. New employees are the losers. In Sri Lanka's debt collapse, prices went up 69.8% in 2022[7], wiping out young adults' savings. Even in the developed world, inflation rates of 5-10% still hit young workers, with rents and mortgage costs rising while wages lag behind. In effect, inflation is a stealth tax, cutting the pay of younger earners.

Third, excessive debt chokes off growth and employment. With tax receipts going into debt repayment, there is little for spending. Sluggish growth means fewer new jobs for new entrants. Youth unemployment already stands at 13% worldwide (2023) [8]. Small output losses accumulate: Sri Lanka's 2022 debt crisis shrank GDP by 7.3% young workers bearing the burnt of lost income and opportunity [7]. Too much debt weighs on economies, effectively taxing a generation through the loss of employment prospects and sluggish labor markets.

One example shows the effect starkly: Sri Lanka. By mid-2022, it had defaulted on obligations equal to its entire GDP. The economy subsequently contracted by 7.3% and inflation soared to 69.8 % [7]. Young Sri Lankans saw fuel lines, empty shelves, and declining wages. Private wages fell ~17% by 2024 [9]. IMF-supported reforms raised taxes and lowered subsidies, making essentials more expensive for students and job-seekers. It became an acute burden for Sri Lanka's young people.



## GLOBAL DEBT TIMEBOMB AND THE YOUTH TAX

Ishan Sharma

Private debt is also part of the burden. In rich countries, households have a combined debt burden of around 74% of GDP (2022) [10], much of which is tied to student loans and home mortgages. Rising interest rates now force many young households to spend more on debt servicing and less on entrepreneurship or home ownership. Private debt stands at record near-levels internationally. Any such shock – a loss of employment or a rise in interest rates – is immediately another hidden tax on the young, as they pay the lenders before everyone else. In poor nations, the effect is even more devastating: with poor safety nets, young workers suffer severe declines in standards of living.

Around the world, young people today are protesting high prices and unemployment, arguing that previous generations borrowed too much and passed the bill along. This debt obligation taints trust: estranged young adults will delay careers or children, inhibiting growth. Essentially, a generation can become "on the hook" for mistakes they did not make. Studies show that perceived unfairness in debt can fuel political grievance. Already, many young voters support debt forgiveness proposals and demand school and green jobs expenditures. Ignoring this intergenerational equity risks social turmoil and jeopardizes the growth needed to escape the debt trap.

***This is the world debt ticking time bomb. In reality, modern-day debt manifests in future taxes on young generations: higher income and consumption taxes, lower public services, and even inflation nibbling away at pay.***

The record is clear: excessive debt is associated with fiscal consolidation and recessions hardest for the young. Unless policy is altered, the next generation will inherit an anemic economy and fewer opportunities. In truth, this global debt bomb is really a backdoor tax on the young. This is happening today, not some distant tomorrow – today.

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## WHEN FANS BECOME STANS: DOES STAN CULTURE DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Aarna Kapadia

### **I**ntroduction

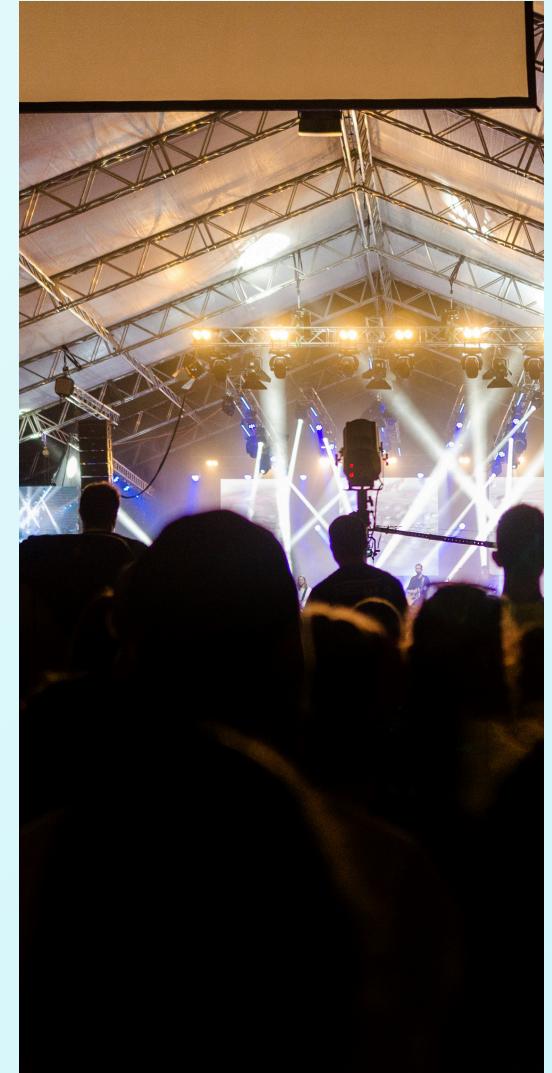
Where is the line between admiration and obsession? Being a fan of a singer's discography or an actor's character on a show is a commonplace experience for most young people. But what happens when liking your favourite celebrity turns into being obsessed with them? In the digital landscape, fan culture has intensified to the point that a whole new term has been created for those who go above and beyond for their favourite celebrities; "stans", or overzealous fans, was a term originating from Eminem's 2000 single "Stan", which depicted an obsessive fan's parasocial relationship with him. Over time, stan culture has become widespread, with many even taking pride in the label. From waiting outside of hotels to attacking critics on X, celebrity stans are everywhere. However, the real question that underlies this culture is whether it is an innocuous passion or a dangerous delusion.

### **Against Stan Culture**

One of the most prominent arguments against stans is the hostile atmosphere they create surrounding a lack of praise for their favourite celebrities. This refers to the environment in which fanbases unjustifiably cyberbully anyone who does not praise their idols. For example, in 2015, artist Beck won Album of the Year over Beyoncé. The response from her fandom was to edit Beck's Wikipedia page and send hateful messages to him, simply for accepting an award. Although everyone is entitled to their opinions, fandoms produced circumstances in which individuals who did nothing malicious suffered bullying and invasions of their boundaries. Moreover, celebrities like Elizabeth Olsen, Selena Gomez, and Pete Davidson have all deleted social media at some point due to hate they have received. Such an environment punishes individuals for respectfully exercising their freedom of speech.

Through such a pugnacious landscape, even stans themselves suffer. When public criticism of a celebrity becomes restricted, fans are prompted to favour quantity over quality. For example, Taylor Swift has released over 200 songs in the last 5 years; still, her fanbase urges her to release more albums or versions of existing songs. This contributes to a trend of celebrities being able to expect success as they know their loyal fanbase will continue to promote them. Taylor Swift's album "THE TORTURED POETS DEPARTMENT" was met with mixed reviews from critics. Regardless, the collection of songs topped the Billboard 200 for 17 weeks. Without committed fans preordering, presaving, and replaying the album, it is not known that the album would have gained the same traction. By reducing bandwagoning on social media, it can be easier for celebrities to be assessed for their talent and skill, rather than the size of their fanbase.

Finally, stan culture harms the celebrity that stans support. Though cases like Eminem's are few and far between, less intense versions of similar behaviour still affect celebrities psychologically. Intense acts like following, recording without consent, and finding personal information have become an integral part of celebrity culture. Public figures naturally often feel psychologically exhausted, overwhelmed, and stressed as they lose their sense of safety while being forced to emulate their idolized image. As recently as last year, Chappell Roan took to Tiktok to admonish stans who "stalked" her and her family (Sperisen). Hence, even the interactions and gratitude associated with having supporters are hindered by extreme cases of obsession.



## WHEN FANS BECOME STANS: DOES STAN CULTURE DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Aarna Kapadia

### For Stan Culture

Nonetheless, devotion towards celebrities is able to garner benefits. Firstly, superfans often argue that online fandoms provide a community in a digitally-oriented world. Through speculating about their favourite celebrity's next project or attending concerts together, individuals are able to connect with others and discuss common interests. This sense of belonging has the power to combat loneliness in a world where the negative effects of social isolation are at an all-time high.

Secondly, the joint influence stans possess has mobilised online political activism. Online supporters were pivotal in freeing Britney Spears from her conservatorship in 2021. Communities on Reddit organised advocacy, and the "#FreeBritney" was posted half a million times in just 24 hours surrounding her testimony during the trial. This helped raise funds, brought greater awareness, and encouraged Spears to speak out, leading to her eventual liberation. Media brands have even used their viewship to encourage young individuals to vote on or support important issues. For instance, MTV's "Vote For Your Life" campaign aided young people in voting and researching candidates, allegedly garnered 23.3 million views, 1.9 million engagements, and 93 million impressions. Such examples demonstrate how a fandom's capacity to unite towards a single cause can create positive change and provide greater representation for the youth in political settings.

Lastly, those who defend stan culture argue that, aside from extreme cases, the unfavourable perception of passionate supporters is closely tied with sexism. The concept of a stan is frequently reduced to an archetype of a hysterical teenage girl. However, it is not much different from men yelling at sports games, having superstitious beliefs when following a team, and waiting in line to buy signed merchandise. On a principle level, being passionate and knowledgeable should not be looked down upon, especially when female-dominated forms of recreation are the ones targeted.

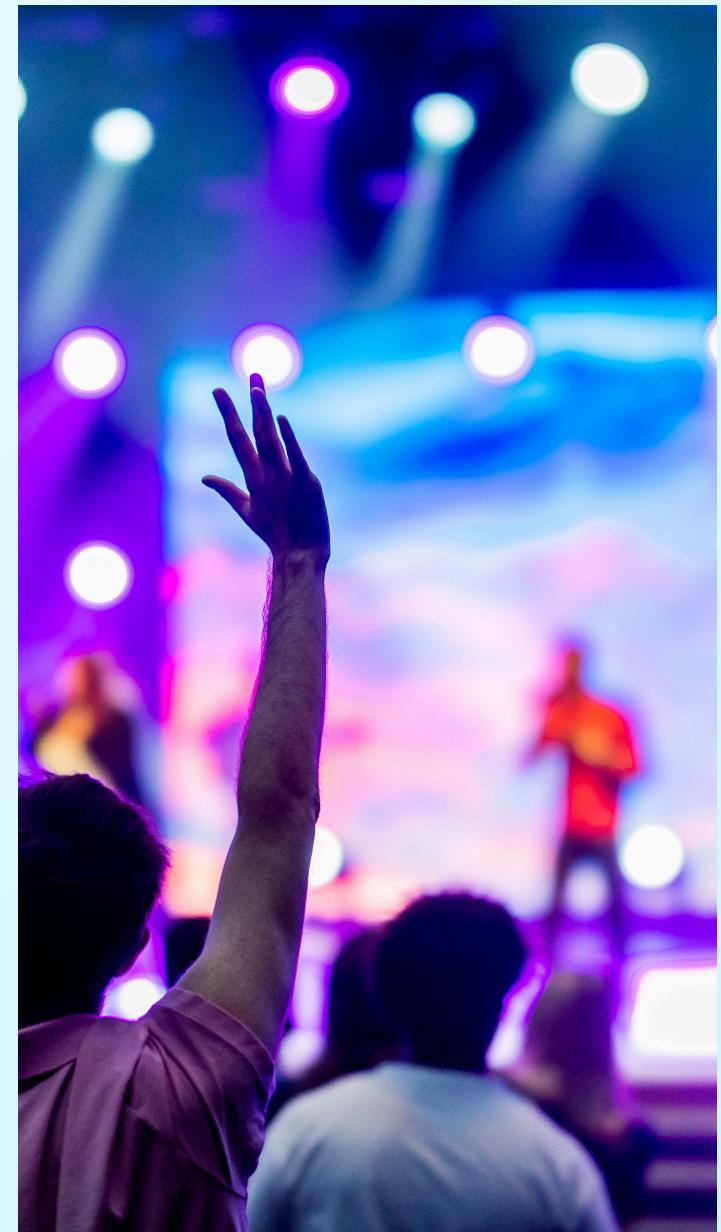
### Conclusion

In conclusion, when hiding behind a screen, fans easily forget that their idols are real human beings. Stan culture carries the potential to be toxic and harmful, but it also has the possibility to be empowering and socially impactful.

***Ultimately, the best relationships between fans and celebrities are the ones rooted in mutual respect.***

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## EDUCATION'S SILENT EXCLUSION: HOW ABLEISM MANIFESTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Bảo Linh Trần Ngọc

**Y**ou're running a race where the track tilts against you, where the rules change halfway through, and where you're expected to smile while tripping. While this might sound preposterous, it's the reality of what many neurodivergent students face everyday.

In school, one of the first "rules" students are taught is to sit still, with hands placed neatly on their desks, and heads looking straight at the board. They're taught not to rock, not to flap, and not to pace. While this method of movement might work fine for the majority of us, it can also be suffocating for the minority of students whose brains simply function differently. These minority of students are neurodivergent, and the behaviours that curriculums define as "broken" are the very behaviours that help them think, focus, and carry out our tasks.

Stimming, short for Self Stimulatory Behaviour, is a way to block out external stimuli in pursuit of self-regulation. Many autistic individuals experience dysregulation in their nervous system; this commonly involves an overactive sympathetic "fight or flight" system, and an underactive parasympathetic "rest and digest" system. Stimming plays a big role in balancing the autonomic nervous system, activating the parasympathetic system by providing desired sensory stimulation and a predictable sensory input. In cases of overstimulation, or receiving too much unpredictable external sensory input, stimming can serve as a method to block out excess sensory input, and in cases of understimulation, stimming can also be a method to provide extra sensory input.

For a student on the autism spectrum, sensory signals can arrive with heightened intensity due to differences in thalamic filtering, making background noise, fluorescent lights, or even the texture of a chair overwhelming unless balanced by self-chosen sensory input.

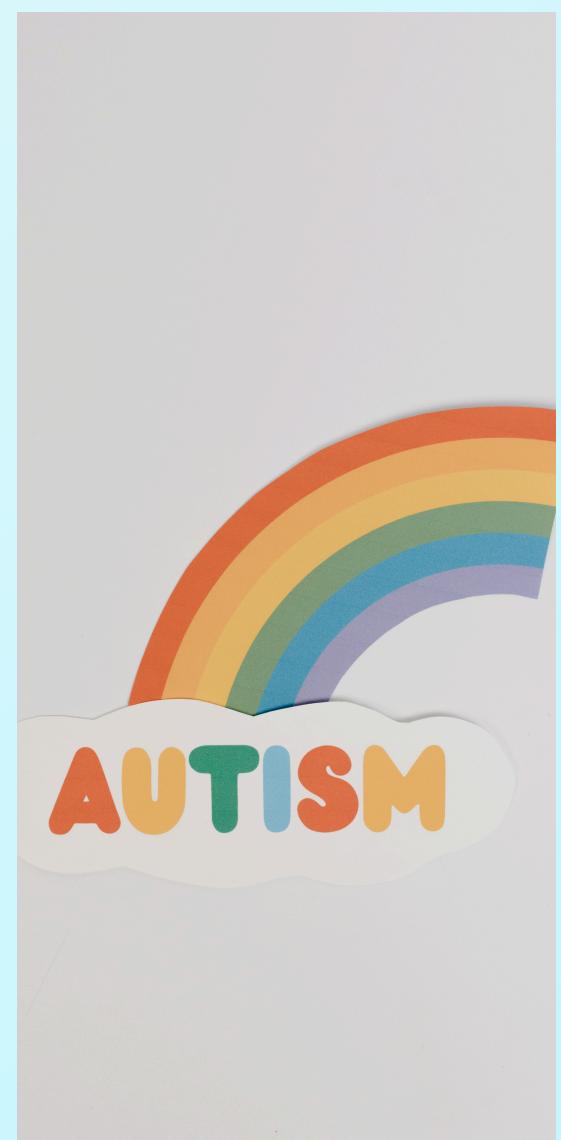
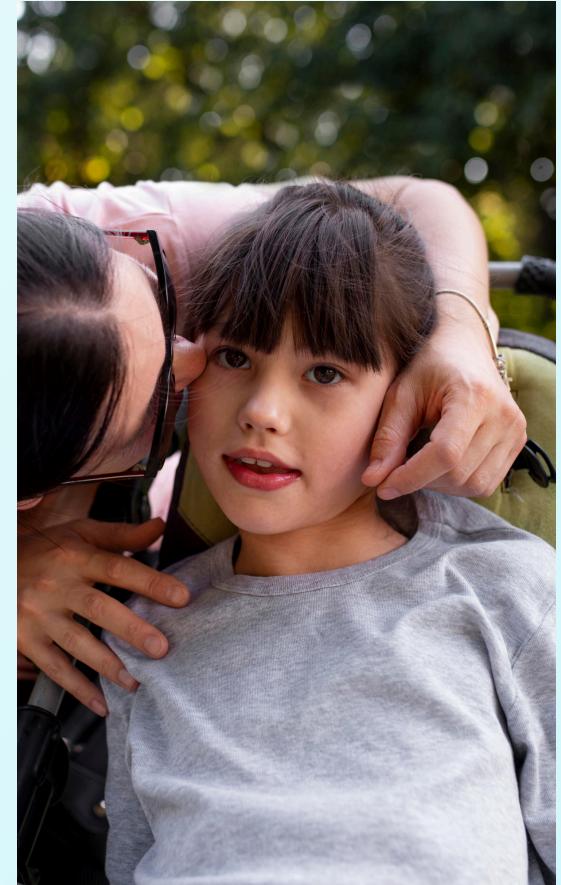
However, classrooms often shut down these natural coping mechanisms before students even begin to learn in the first place. In classrooms, posters of "A good listener", with their hands on their laps, feet flat on the ground, and eyes straight forward, dominate the walls, and reinforce the false narrative that stillness equates to intelligence and silence automatically equals respect.

This is fundamentally flawed because it relates compliance to learning, ignoring decades of research showing that kinesthetic movement can increase hippocampal activity and boost memory consolidation.

***At the end of the day, when the very movements enabling students to regulate their attention and manage their inputs are interpreted and mistreated as offences, classrooms end up prioritizing compliance and conformity instead of actual genuine learning.***

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## AI, ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM, AND THE CASE FOR THE HUMANITIES

Stephen Mintah

**F**or decades, education has been framed as a pathway to secure employment. As students, we are often told by overbearing family members to pursue subjects that appear "practical" - like computer science or law - with the promise of leading directly to lucrative careers. As a result, humanities subjects such as English Literature have been sidelined and are falling out of favour with students. According to the Joint Council for Qualifications, entries for A-level English Literature in the UK have declined dramatically, from being the sixth most popular A-level in 2017 to the eleventh in 2025, with 37,931 students sitting the exam this year.

This decline reflects not necessarily a sudden loss of interest in literature itself, but rather a wider cultural anxiety: if education cannot guarantee employability, we can often see it as a luxury rather than a necessity.

### Anti-Intellectualism and the Humanities

Recently, we've seen this anxiety compounded by high-profile debates over the perceived value of humanities education. Last year, a tweet from Dr. Ally Louks, celebrating her PhD in English Literature and thesis on Olfactory Ethics went viral. Her successful thesis explored how language associated with smell shapes power dynamics in literature, but her achievement sparked widespread controversies and quickly escalated into a culture-war flashpoint. Some questioned the work's utility, some dismissed her work as "too woke" or "too pretentious" and harrowingly, some attacked her with misogynistic comments and threats. Humanities subjects, once defended for their role in nurturing empathy, understanding and critical thought, are now frequently forced to justify themselves in terms of ROI. Is there really a point to studying Shakespeare for years if there's no money at the end of it? Many don't think so, and perhaps this sentiment reflects a broader climate of growing anti-intellectualism and skepticism of higher education, especially in non-STEM fields.

### AI and the Collapse of "Golden Tickets"

The irony, however, is that fields once considered untouchable are themselves being reshaped by automation. AI is no longer confined to trivial tasks; it's increasingly capable of writing code and completing complex technical tasks. Entry-level positions in computing and other STEM disciplines - the very careers once described as "future-proof" - are now being dramatically restructured with global tech companies like Microsoft and Google leading the charge. Indeed, widespread layoffs in the tech industry this year have demonstrated that even highly skilled, in-demand roles are vulnerable to rapid shifts in the labour market. In the current world, the "golden ticket" mentality that once drove subject choice now seems increasingly fragile.

### Towards a Culture of Learning for Its Own Sake

Perhaps paradoxically, the rise of AI offers us an opportunity to reconsider the purpose of education. If we are heading towards a society where the study of no one subject can guarantee job security, then it might be time to free learning from the narrow confines of careerism. Subjects such as English literature, history and philosophy shouldn't be seen as impractical diversions from the study of "more important" subjects, but as essential disciplines that equip students with the indispensable skills of critical analysis and ethical reasoning.

In a world where machines can replicate many technical skills, human creativity has become more- not less- important. Rather than discouraging students from pursuing the humanities, it's time we begin to recognise their enduring role in preparing individuals to adapt to social, cultural and technological change.



### What next?

The decline of the humanities and the debates surrounding their relevance reflect a culture increasingly preoccupied with economic outcomes. The economic disruption caused by AI has exposed the weaknesses of this mindset: if AI can replace jobs across all fields, then education cannot be reduced to a mere transaction between study and career.

Instead, education should be reclaimed as a space for genuine curiosity and intellectual growth. The question should not only be "What job will this lead to?" but also "What kind of knowledge and thought will this cultivate?" In that sense, I hope the rise of AI may finally push us towards a healthier understanding of education's true value.

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## A THOUSAND DOLLARS A MONTH: SOLUTION OR ILLUSION?

Riddhima Sahu

**W**hat if, at the start of every month, a message popped up on your phone: '\$1,000 has been credited to your account'? No conditions, no strings attached, just the assurance that you could cover your basic needs. This is not just a dream—it is the core of a policy idea known as Universal Basic Income (UBI), which is interestingly reshaping debates about poverty, inequality, and the future of work. UBI has been proposed as a solution to reduce poverty and support individuals affected by job loss due to automation and AI advancements. However, even if it offers opportunities to reduce poverty and empower individuals, it faces economic, political, and social challenges that must be addressed for effective implementation.

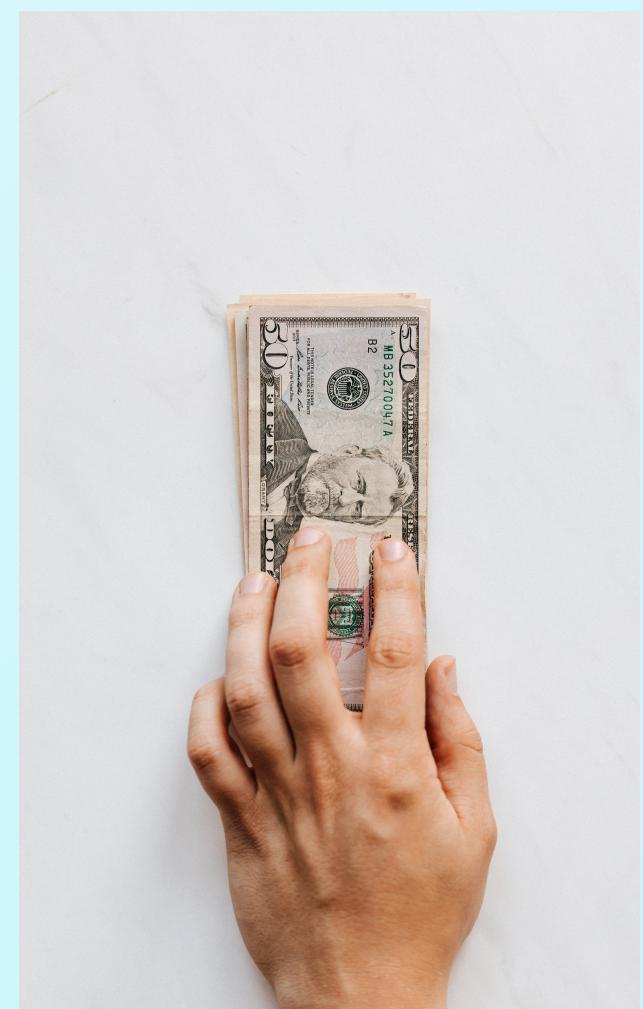
Universal Basic Income or UBI outlines a financial system where the government grants every adult citizen a set amount of money regularly, regardless of their employment status. The idea of providing basic income to all members of society goes back centuries. The 16th-century English philosopher and statesman Thomas More mentions the idea in his best-known work, "Utopia". Not only him, but Thomas Paine, a pamphleteer, and Martin Luther King Jr. wanted to implement a similar policy. Unlike conditional welfare, which requires beneficiaries to prove eligibility—such as income level, disability status, or job-seeking efforts—UBI has no strings attached. UBI is for everyone; welfare is limited to specific groups. UBI eliminates lengthy forms, while welfare often involves complex administration. In 2023, researchers at OpenAI and the University of Pennsylvania published a working paper analyzing the impact of the technology on the labor market. According to the study, 19% of workers could see 50% or more of their tasks impacted by technology. Supporters believed that UBI would help overcome this economic transformation and help the victims to some extent. Many supporters are mainly liberals and some conservatives, including Milton Friedman (a conservative economist), who want to give poor people cash rather than an array of welfare benefits. People could then use the money as they saw fit. Unlike welfare, which can miss people due to strict eligibility checks, UBI reaches everyone and ensures a basic income floor.

***UBI lets individuals choose—whether to study, care for family, or start a business.***

Despite its promise to curtail poverty, Universal Basic Income still faces an uphill battle of cost. According to the nonprofit Tax Foundation, Andrew Yang's \$1,000-a-month Freedom Dividend for every adult would have cost \$2.8 trillion each year. Universal cash transfer could fuel inflation, especially for essentials like food and housing. If prices rise faster than income, the purchasing power of UBI would shrink, defeating its very purpose. Governments would need significantly higher taxes or cuts in other programmes. The debate between UBI and conditional welfare boils down to one question: Do we trust people more than systems to decide what they need most? UBI promises dignity, simplicity, and adaptability, while welfare ensures cost-effectiveness and focused support. The path forward may not be choosing one over the other, but finding a balance that secures both fairness and freedom in the face of future economic challenges.

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## EMOTIONAL ARMOR

Olivia Nguyen



**S**top crying!" the mother shouts at her child when he is sad. This sentence feels like an arrow hitting his heart. "Man up. You must not cry!" Another sentence from his dad; more arrows to his soul and more pain that he carries. So the kid "protects" himself with a helmet - for not speaking what he feels; a chestplate - for not crying when being sad; a shield - for not feeling anything. And now, with self-protection, nothing can hurt him. He thinks he is strong and safe. As time flies, and the kid is now a grown-up man, the "emotional armor" still stays there. The armor results in him not allowing himself to hug anyone, to cry, or to have fun. This armor also doesn't allow him to say: "I'm not okay." It forces him to say: "I'm fine." People think that he has it all together. But inside his soul, he is tired because of trying. This mentioned kid is not alone. In fact, there are many people like him - all wearing emotional armor. It's not a kind of protection like they think, it's a prison.

I am a girl who has seen family violence. Mistakes meant punishment. The pain appears in many ways. I learnt how to be quiet when I was scared, learned how to pretend to be happy when I wanted to cry. It was my way of suiting up in invisible protection. I didn't realize those "emotional armors" would stick with me into adulthood, like a shield but also like a cage. It came with me to class, and it pops up in friendships and love.. This shield kept me safe from my fears, but as I grew up, it turned into a prison that kept me away from the folks I cared about. If we continue to go through life with the armors ingrained in us from childhood, will we ever be truly free?

Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) shows that traumatic experiences in childhood, including abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction, are strongly associated with poor physical and mental health in adulthood. Initial research by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente identified ten common ACEs. They include:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Mother treated violently
5. Substance abuse in the home
6. Mental illness of a family member
7. Parents divorced/separated
8. Family member incarcerated
9. Emotional neglect
10. Physical neglect



## EMOTIONAL ARMOR

Olivia Nguyen

Later studies expanded the list to include factors such as community violence, discrimination, and natural disasters. In some countries, "emotional armor" appears when children are under pressure from the expectation of high results from parents, or the comparison between children and children. Parents accidentally make the children feel like they are full of flaws. Moreover, the expectations from society and culture imply that "boys must not cry" or "girls have to be obedient"; overendurance is seen as strength. Emotional armor creates negative consequences in adulthood. According to UNICEF, domestic violence against children is common in Vietnam despite protective laws. Globally, harmful social norms that underpin violent upbringing methods persist, with slightly more than 1 in 4 mothers and primary caregivers indicating that physical punishment is necessary to raise and educate children properly. People who wear "emotional armor" always hold back, afraid of being judged for showing weakness. The armor is similar to the wall that separates them from the world. Despite having many relationships, they still keep distance from others. As the ACEs research I mentioned above, children with high ACEs scores are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, and addiction as adults. Long silence and repression can lead to psychosomatic illnesses. According to the CDC & Kaiser Permanente ACEs Study, people with  $\geq 4$  ACEs had a 4.6-fold increased risk of depression and a 7-fold increased risk of alcoholism. Wearing "emotional armor" creates difficulty in family relationships, too. Their spouse or lover feels that "there is a wall" between the two of them. The fear of being hurt makes them push others away. This effect follows them when they teach their children. When they don't know how to express their feelings, they can recreate silence, distance, or even violence in their new family. In work, people with armor often try to "endure" instead of seeking help, leading to burnout. In an environment that requires teamwork, they avoid conflict by remaining silent, allowing problems to build up. They are misunderstood as "cold" or "uncaring." Armor reduces the leadership ability. Leaders with armor will find it difficult to create empathy and inspire employees. The "emotional armor" gets passed on creating a motto of "always strong". If many individuals carry this motto, society becomes a place where people are distant, lack sharing, and increase collective stress.

***Armor doesn't fall off overnight, it's often etched into the skin since childhood.***

But we're not meant to be locked in cold metal forever. We can start with small cracks: a diary entry where our feelings are spoken, a daring admission of "weakness," or a long hug after years of holding back. Each crack is a step open, letting the light in. Taking off the armor means giving each other a safe haven where there is no judgment; where vulnerability is not seen as a burden. Children can learn in school that crying is a sign of strength. Instead of putting pressure on employees to be "always okay," workplaces can promote a culture of care. Additionally, social groups should do more to let victims of violence know they are not alone. Most importantly, though, strength must be reinterpreted as the courage to show others your weaknesses rather than as a wall of silence.

Can we create a culture where vulnerability equals strength? I used to believe that armor was the only way to survive. Now I realize that true strength is not hiding your wounds, but letting others see them. Emotional armor has saved us, but it's time we learn to take it off - for ourselves, our families, and future generations.

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## FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE ( FMD): ONE OF THE WORST NIGHTMARES FOR THE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY OF INDONESIA AND ITS AMBITION TO RISE AGAIN

Thảo Trương Thanh

**F**MD is widely considered a deadly disease that can put the health of Artiodactyla (the subcategory of mammals that cows belong to) at risk in general, and cattle in particular. First recognized in Germany in 1897 by Friedrich Loeffler, a German bacteriologist, foot-and-mouth disease later became widespread throughout Eurasia. One of the countries most affected by FMD is Indonesia. According to the WOAH (World Organisation for Animal Health) report about FMD in 2023, Indonesia was the Southeast Asian country with the largest number of FMD cases, as it accounted for over 90% of the world's FMD outbreaks. The Aphthovirus, or FMD virus, is said to be the cause of this disease. Scientists have shown that this virus contains seven serotypes (distinct forms): A, O, C, SAT1, SAT2, SAT3, ASIAN1. Among these seven serotypes, serotype O is the most common factor that leads to massive FMD cases in Indonesia.

***This has badly impacted a lot of aspects in Indonesia. Indeed, what makes FMD that dangerous?***

### **Common symptoms and effects of FMD in Indonesia**

The most recognisable way to identify FMD is vesicles on their body parts such as lips, tongues, noses, and mostly on their toes. Besides, there are other signs of the FMD virus, for example: fever, skipping meals, or sudden weight loss.

Although this pandemic does not infect humans, FMD has still brought a number of damage to many aspects of Indonesia. In the first place is the dramatic drop in the number of cattle due to the rapid speed of FMD spread. In 2022 there were over 570,000 cases of buffaloes, sheep, goats that had been infected with the FMD virus. Also, FMD has had negative impacts on international trade by causing supply chain disruptions, losing over \$1.5 billion yearly. More importantly, this widespread pandemic has increased the anxiety among livestock farmers and consumers of meat and dairy, as Indonesians are scared about whether it would be safe for their well-being or not.

### **Remedial actions and future intentions**

In 2022, the quantity of FMD cases in Indonesia was decreasing. At the same time, the Indonesia Ministry of Agriculture took it as an opportunity to have a large number of cattle vaccinated against FMD, with the hope of taking control of the pandemic as soon as possible. Additionally, livestock that contracted FMD could recover by ingesting enough electrolytes and vitamins, being provided with digestible meals, and staying in cleaner and breezier accommodations, etc.

These methods are still being applied in Indonesia until now. Besides, the government is strategically intensifying vaccine injections against FMD. However, without public awareness of the danger of FMD, their fight against this disease will continue. Understanding that, the authorities have been showing determination to launch more campaigns in the future so as to call attention to the FMD virus and ways to overcome it. More importantly, a new and efficient vaccine is under development by doctors, professors, and other stakeholders.



## FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE ( FMD): ONE OF THE WORST NIGHTMARES FOR THE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY OF INDONESIA AND ITS AMBITION TO RISE AGAIN

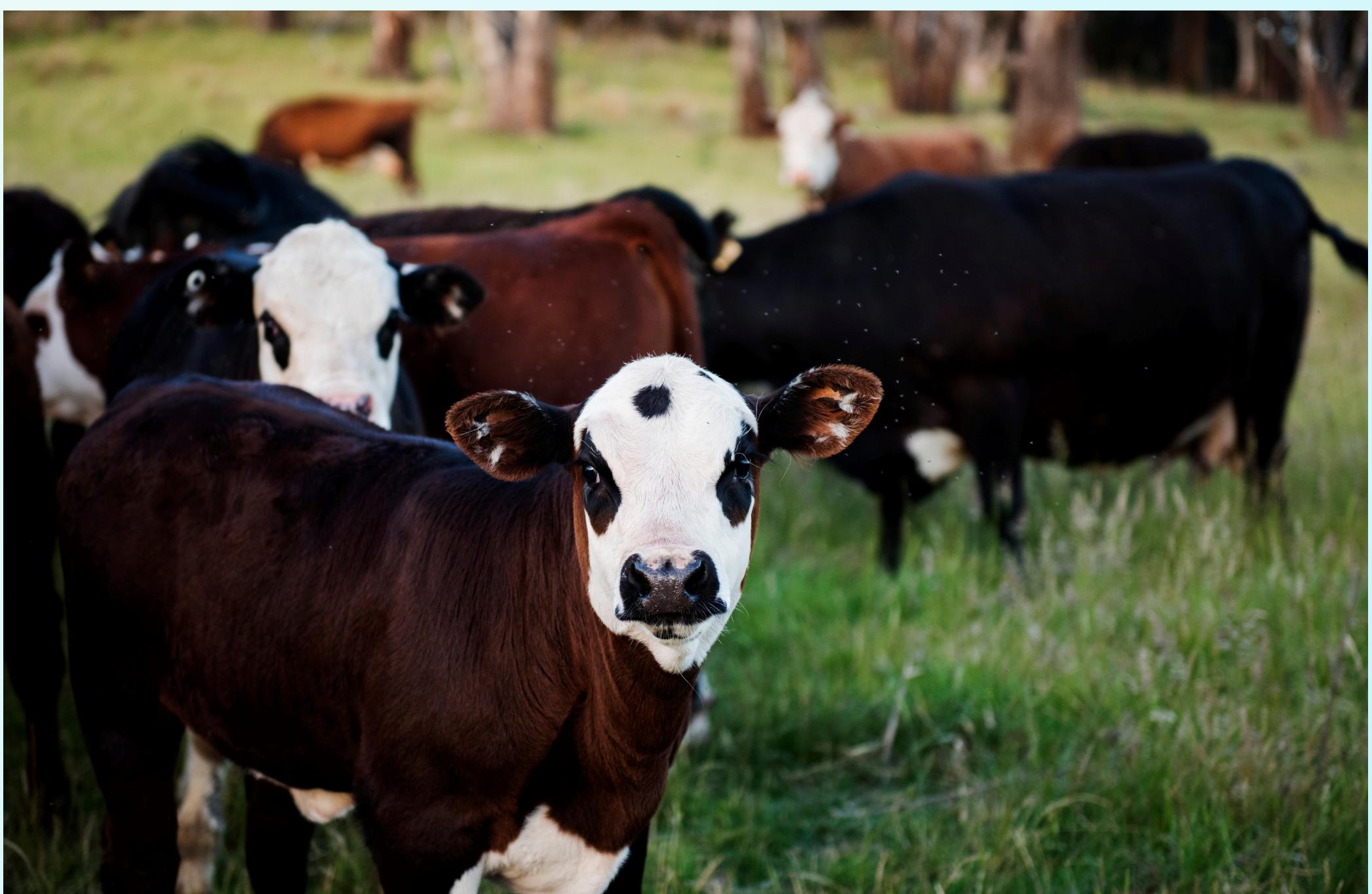
Thảo Trương Thanh

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With current methods and upcoming techniques, Indonesia is doing its best to reach its goals: eliminating FMD by 2035 and improving livestock quality.

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## FOREIGNERS AND CUSTOMARY MARRIAGES IN GHANA; CAPACITY, VALIDITY, AND CROSS-BORDER CHALLENGES

Salamatu Haruna

If your partner is from Africa, you may have heard the term 'customary marriage or traditional wedding', meaning a set of practices finalized with a ceremony after which a man and a woman are considered married. This was the only form of marriage known to Africans before their interactions with the West. While rites depend on the community, all indigenous African ethnic groups have customary marriages that today coexist with the Western type. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria, the first stage is the introduction, a private meeting between families, followed by a traditional wedding confirming their status as husband and wife (Mahmud, 2022). Among the Gas of Ghana, the 'knocking ceremony' serves a similar purpose before the wedding.

Across Africa, customary marriages remain valid forms of marriage recognized by statute or case law. However, as a creature of custom, their validity is determined by Courts using customary law. In Ghana, customary law is recognized by Article 11 of the Constitution as a set of laws applicable to particular communities. Rules on contracting marriage under custom are therefore a source of law for disputes about validity, succession, and property arising out of a customary marriage. A person who violates such rules, therefore, risks invalidity of the marriage. Since these rules pertain to a specific community, if a person is not subject to any Ghanaian community, they cannot contract a marriage under its customary law.

***The question that arises then is: on what basis will a foreigner, who is not subject to any customary law, contract a Ghanaian customary marriage?***

### Capacity to Marry Under Ghanaian Customary Law

A person's capacity to marry is determined by the law of their domicile. In Ghana's pluralist system, a Ghanaian domicile is further subject to the customary law of their community, or one they have elected to join. Thus, capacity to marry is equally determined by customary law where a customary marriage is contemplated.

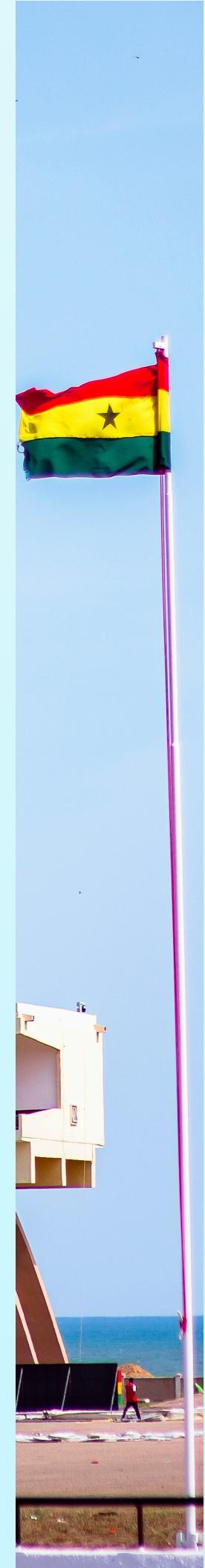
Belonging to a community is primarily by lineage, depending on whether it is patrilineal or matrilineal. In a matrilineal system, as noted in *Eshun v. Jonfia*, children inherit from their mother's line and are deemed to belong to her community. Thus, a child is Ashanti or Fante because the mother is. Under the patrilineal system, as in *Akpoma I v. Gladys Mensah*, a child is Ewe because their father is.

The courts have also recognized that a person may elect to belong to a community. In *King v. Elliot*, it was held that a foreigner may be deemed to belong if there is evidence of such election. Without this, a person is not subject to its rules.

### Customary Marriage by a Foreigner: An Invalidity?

Traditionally, a man marries a woman in accordance with the woman's customary law. The man may appear in his own attire but performs the rites according to her custom. These marriages are valid if general and particular requirements are met. In *Yaotey v. Quaye*, the Court outlined the general requirements as agreement by the parties, consent of both families, publicity, and consummation. Particular requirements differ from one community to another (Kwainoe, 2024). The fact that the man is subject to different laws does not invalidate the marriage.

By this analogy, a foreign man who is not subject to Ghanaian customary law can still marry his Ghanaian wife in accordance with her custom. His lack of belonging to that community does not invalidate the marriage because even under customary law, a man foreign to any custom may contract a marriage within a community.



## FOREIGNERS AND CUSTOMARY MARRIAGES IN GHANA; CAPACITY, VALIDITY, AND CROSS-BORDER CHALLENGES

Salamatu Haruna

In contrast, where the bride is the foreigner, the position changes. The marriage may be socially elaborate but not legally recognised. She is being married under rules she is not subject to, and symbolic participation does not warrant membership in the man's community.

### Cross-Border Problems

Another problem arises with these types of marriages. Customary marriages are potentially polygamous. Even if valid under Ghanaian law, their recognition abroad depends on whether the foreign country recognises polygamous unions.

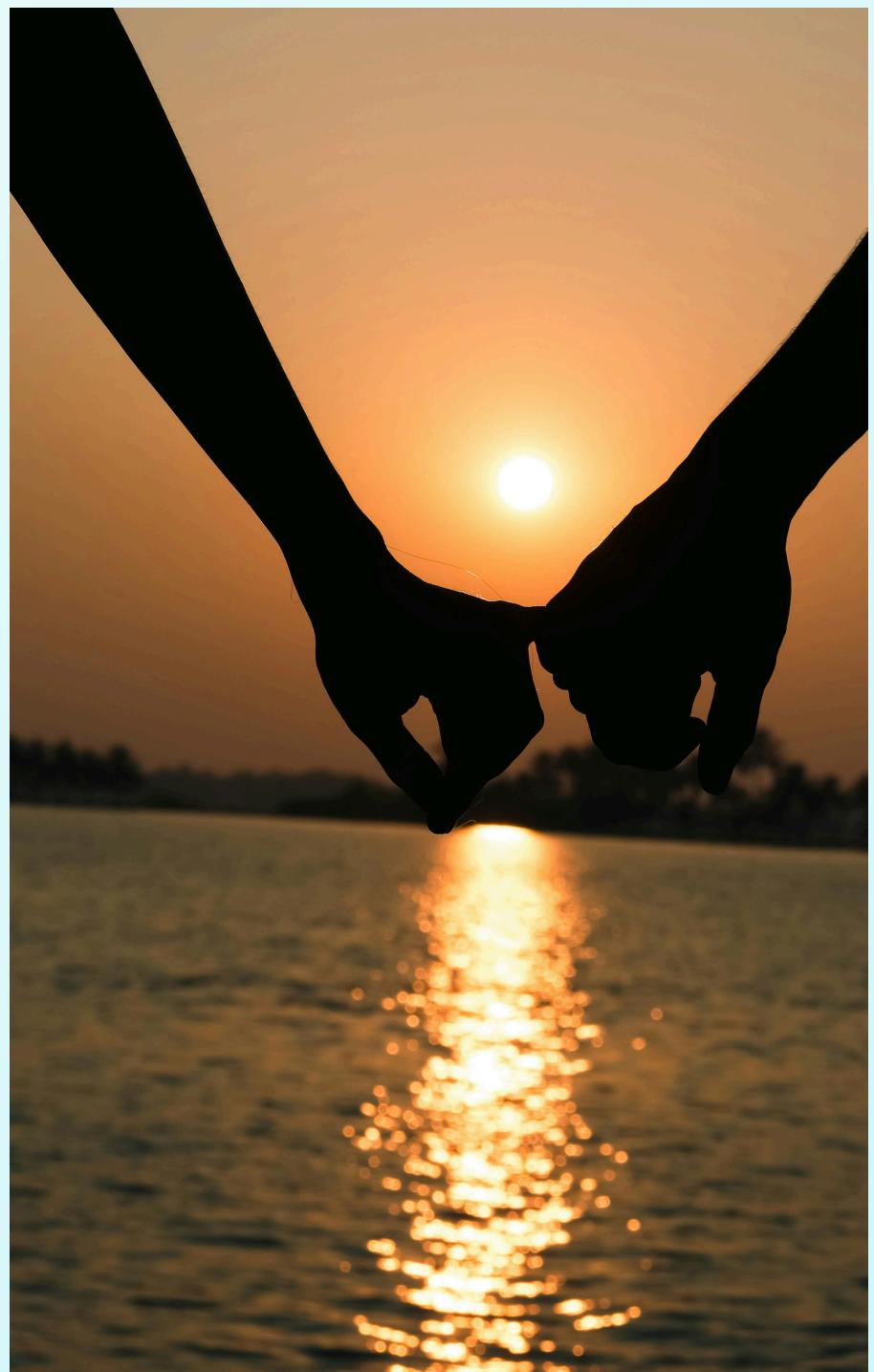
In England, for example, section 11(d) of the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 does not recognise polygamous or potentially polygamous marriages if one party is domiciled in England. Thus, where the home country does not recognise such marriages, the result is a limping marriage: valid in one jurisdiction, invalid in another. This raises questions about succession abroad, since the woman may not be recognised as a lawful spouse. Where the foreign party is the woman, the marriage is void ab initio under Ghanaian law, so recognition abroad does not arise.

### Conclusion

While customary marriage remains deeply embedded in Ghana's pluralist system, its application to foreigners raises challenges. Non-Ghanaian women who marry under customary law risk invalidity in both Ghana and their home countries. To forestall such problems, parties should also contract a marriage under the ordinance after the customary one. The two are distinct under Ghanaian law, but statutory formality may safeguard the marriage when, years later, it is found that the couple were not properly hinged by custom.

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## POWER LANGUAGE: WHY IS ENGLISH CONSIDERED A DOMINANT LANGUAGE?

Ziyoda Kobilbekova

English remains the most popular language in the world today. Every research paper published, international conference, and global publication rely on it. Despite the significance of other major global languages, such as Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic, English continues to maintain its influence in diplomacy, business, science, and culture.

### The Great History

The emergence of the British Empire and its widespread colonization were the primary drivers behind the spread of English. The British empire encompassed South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific regions, where it established a unified language of administration, education, law and trade.

After World War II, the United States gained power in finance, diplomacy, and culture, further cementing English's dominance. English later replaced French and Latin in many spheres. Its status was increasingly confirmed by economic influence and cultural media, such as Hollywood films, jazz, rock music, and later, digital content. By 2023, approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide spoke English either as a native or second language, representing roughly 19% of the global population, (EC English, 2025).

### How English influences Economy and Trade

Global trade, multinational corporations, and international finance often rely on English as a common language. According to a study by Elmura Linguistics, 50% of international companies require at least a B1-level English proficiency certificate when reviewing job applicants.

In the field of science, especially when publishing research papers and conducting laboratory work, the most commonly used language is English. Leading journals, essay competitions, and certification processes require that everything be written in English. For many professionals and students, participation in international conferences and youth summits requires English proficiency as the only means of communication between participants.

English also serves as a primary language in content creation. Nearly half of all websites (almost 50%) use English as the primary language of coordination and algorithm structuring. Social media platforms such as Tiktok, Google, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) all use English as a primary source of gaining users' information.

### Case Studies

#### India

As a postcolonial country, India has partially transitioned to English, even though Hindi and other regional languages are used by citizens in everyday life. Most of the country's top universities teach in English, and civil service exams often require excellence in English.

#### Singapore

In Singapore, English is the language of opportunity, as students attend schools where science and mathematics are often taught in English, preparing students for higher education at the world's top universities.

This multilingual system allows many Singaporeans to thrive in the global economy, which will benefit their home country. In a 2021 survey of Singaporeans, approximately 70% believed that strong English proficiency is a direct path to improving their future career prospects (Tan and Goh, 2021).

## POWER LANGUAGE: WHY IS ENGLISH CONSIDERED A DOMINANT LANGUAGE?

Ziyoda Kobilbekova

### Comparison

Despite the dominance of English, other major languages are also gaining influence:

- Mandarin Chinese: Over 1.1 billion speakers.
- Spanish: Approximately 560 million speakers.
- Arabic: Over 580 million speakers.

However, these languages are not sufficiently widespread in the global infrastructure of trade, technology, and digital communication.

The dominance of English is a consequence of historical empire-building, economic power, technological innovation, and strong cultural influence. English has been, and remains, the language of power, but the future will demand linguistic flexibility.

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## EQUITY = TRUE INCLUSIVITY: REDEFINING THE HEART AND SOUL OF FEMINISM

SaiShruthi Avutapalli

The feminist movement is one of the largest socio-political movements known to humankind. People come together to campaign to end discrimination and oppression of all groups directly affected by patriarchal norms. To some, it is a fight for basic rights and to regain opportunities taken away merely based on sex; to others it is an opportunity to provide a voice, sometimes even to be a voice for everyone that has been directly affected and marginalized by gendered power structures. But the one direct thing that the movement actively works on is providing these groups of people with the same resources and opportunities as the ones privileged enough to enjoy these benefits without assistance. The oppression and marginalization of underrepresented groups continues to be a prevalent societal issue, which is what the movement strives to end. Its main objective is to maintain an equilibrium and balance in society, to ensure that everyone is given a platform to exercise their rights. This, as most people call it, is equality- a basic necessity which, unfortunately, not everyone has direct access to.

How exactly is this equality achieved? To answer that question, we first must define what equality means in an ideal sense and understand why that alone isn't a sufficient criterion- this naturally leads to the concept of "equity", and why it's advised to adopt an "equity-over-equality" approach in the ongoing struggle for empowerment. Equality directly implies the provision of equal opportunity for everyone, while equity means providing varied, specific levels of opportunity to different groups of people based on their basic accessibility to resources and opportunities, to ensure that everyone receives the same amount of opportunity as an end result. As a matter of fact, it can be understood that equality is more of a result of equity. Taking equality to be the foundation of the feminist movement's goals in today's day and age is often misleading, since years of research and experience has led to the conclusion that achieving equality is merely handing everyone the same level of opportunity, while in factual reasoning, that might just reinforce hegemonic values and agitate the entire movement itself, therefore invalidating the dire need for justice. For context, hegemonic beliefs can be defined as dominant ideologies that support and justify power imbalances by painting them as natural and inevitable rather than recognizing them as a forced unjust pattern of continuous misconduct and abuse of power, also leading to the rationalization of the actions and propaganda carried out by certain anti-feminist groups. To understand why this movement and this fight for equity means so much to so many people, we must recognize how over the years, the fight for freedom has continuously evolved, reflecting a constantly shifting picture in how these groups are being treated. The roots of feminism can be traced back to the beginning of human civilization itself. The movement is typically separated into three waves- the suffragette movement, where women fought for the right to vote and their fight for property rights; the movement concerning equality and anti-discrimination; and a 1990s wave that was more of a scope-broadening version of the second wave (which supported the privileging of heterosexual white women rather than including several other participating marginalized groups). A recent, fourth wave in feminism, promotes and supports digital activism with a focus on intersectionality. The fourth wave also saw women rise up against sexual assault and harassment, with the #metoo movement being a key example of its manifestation on social media, as women shared experiences with and raised awareness of sexual abuse.

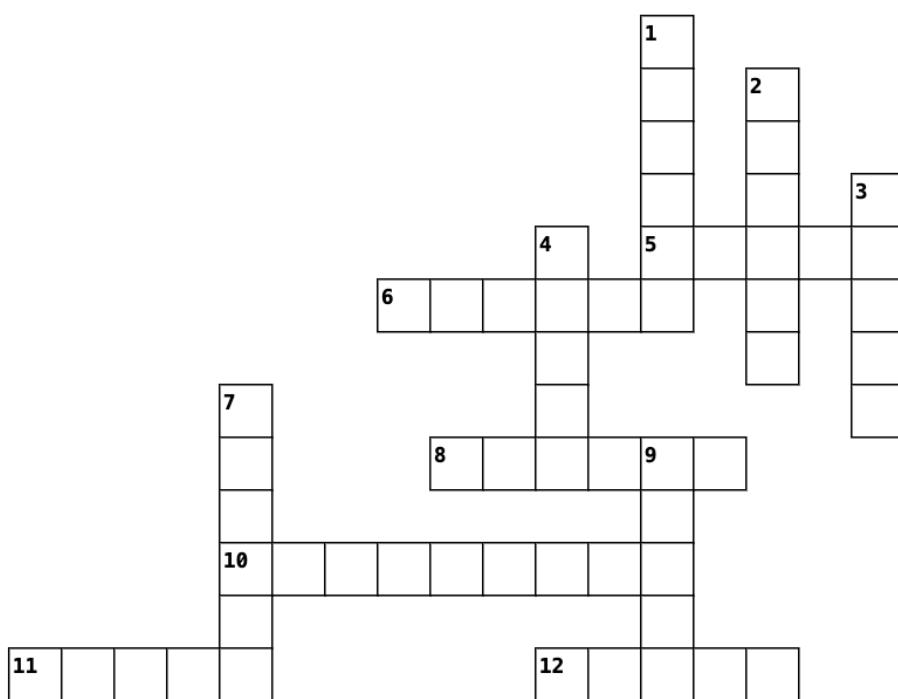
No matter how different each phase of the movement has been, the one evolution that has taken shape over time is the focus on egalitarianism over exterior equality. Everyone must realize that it is fair to provide extra support and resources to affected groups to make sure everyone is put on the same pedestal, which is the definition of true inclusivity. To advocate for equality alone would mean encouraging the idea of providing everyone with the same opportunities regardless of systemic barriers and unequal circumstances. That falls short of the feminist movements intended goals to help subjugated groups.

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## Crossword: Which Country?



### Across:

5. Most populous country in the world
6. Capital known as the City of Light
8. Home of the Amazon Rainforest
10. Continent and country known for kangaroos
11. African nation known for safaris and Mount Kilimanjaro
12. Ancient land of pyramids and pharaohs

### Down:

1. Birthplace of democracy and the Olympics
2. Country just south of the United States
3. Island nation famous for sushi and samurai
4. Birthplace of Buddhism and the Taj Mahal
7. The world's second-largest country by area
9. Boot-shaped nation famous for pasta and pizza

## Word Search: Spooky Season



### Word Bank:

Pumpkin  
Costume  
Candy  
Autumn  
Lantern

Moonlight  
Harvest  
Bats  
Spooky  
Maze

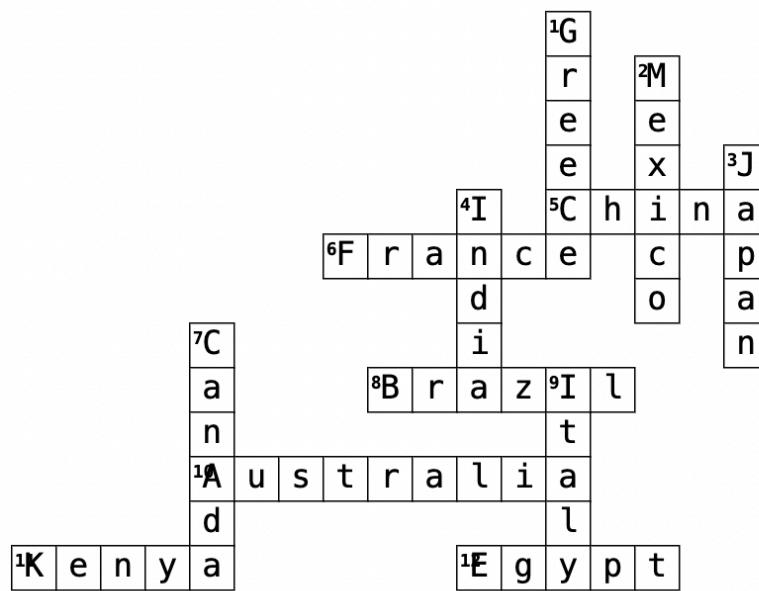
## Crypto-Quote: The Question

**"UP CF PS OPU UP CF, UIBU JT  
UIF RVFTUJPO." - XJMMJBN  
TIBLTQFBSF"**

### Instructions:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFRFLP = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.

## Crossword: Which Country?



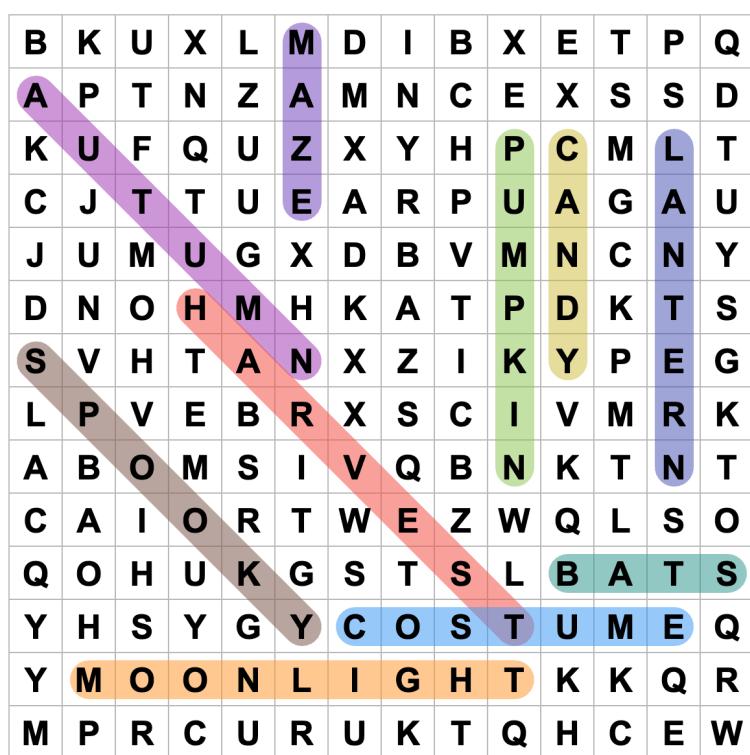
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## Word Search: Spooky Season



## Crypto-Quote: The Question

TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS  
THE QUESTION - WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE

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### Word Bank:

Pumpkin	Moonlight
Costume	Harvest
Candy	Bats
Autumn	Spooky
Lantern	Maze