News

70% young S'poreans view high cost of living top barrier to having kids: NTU AI-powered survey

Others are worried about work-life balance and "mental preparedness".
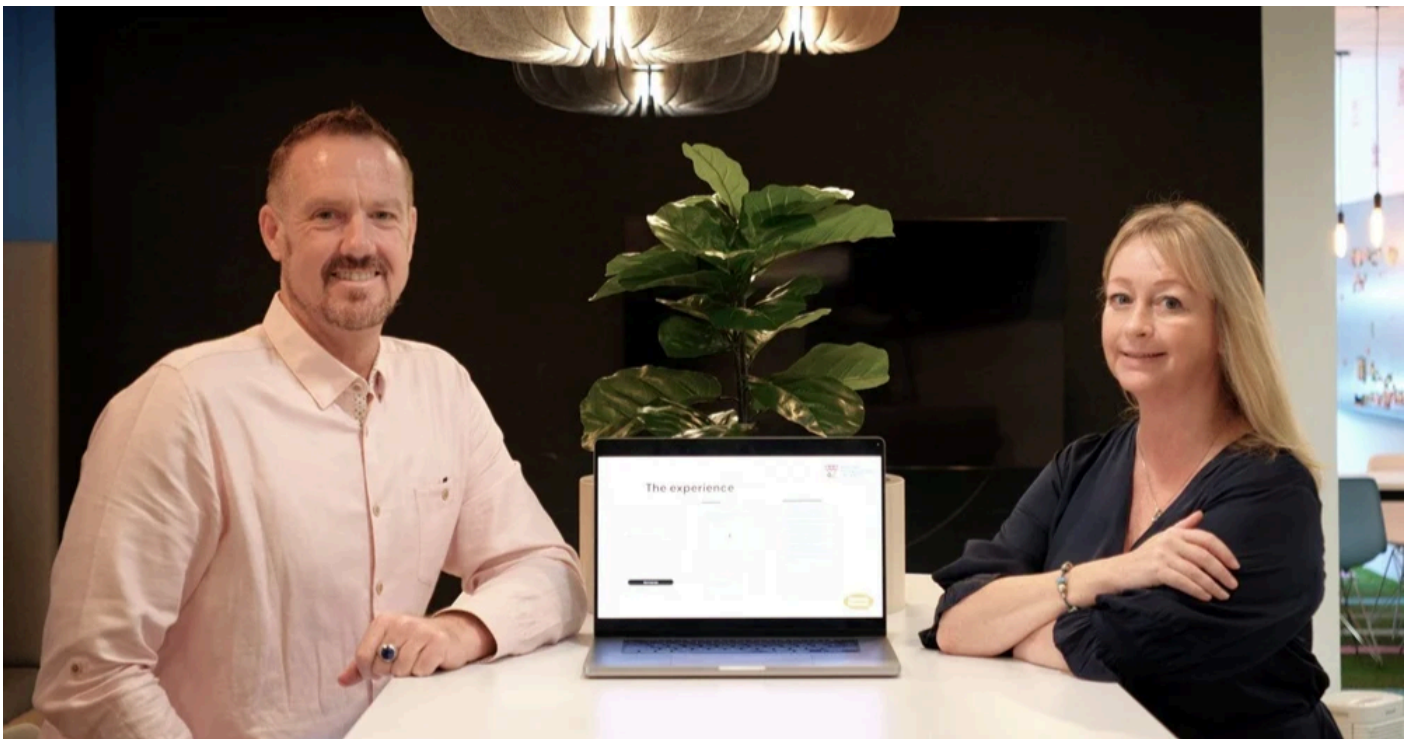
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mothership

December 12, 2024, 07:13 PM

Finances are at the top of many young Singaporeans' minds when it comes to starting a family, with a recent local survey stating that 70 per cent of respondents view the high cost of living as the most significant barrier to having kids.

But it's not just money that's weighing on their minds.

Work-life balance and mental readiness also emerged as significant challenges.

60 per cent of respondents cited struggles to juggle career ambitions and family responsibilities, while 40 per cent expressed concerns about their mental preparedness for parenthood.

First time AI-powered platform was used in a survey

Led by professor Gemma Calvert, a neuromarketing expert from NTU's Nanyang Business School, the study used an AI-powered platform for the first time to interview 230 individuals aged 18 to 35.

Other interesting findings

The study uncovered other concerns, including anxieties about environmental issues like climate change, with some participants expressing fears for the future and well-being of their children.

Additionally, mental health and the impact of generational trauma were prominent topics, as many respondents felt that Singapore's current support systems for emotional and psychological well-being are lacking.

Some participants of the survey expressed less conventional concerns, such as the desire to explore alternative family structures, such as co-parenting or raising children with female friends.

One respondent shared the difficulty of balancing parenthood with aspirations such as becoming a "digital nomad."

"My life goal as of now is to basically become a digital nomad, where I can work freelance or remotely from any part of the world," the person wrote.

A male respondent felt that Singapore's system should do more for fathers.

Using AI reportedly yields more honest results

The platform used by the survey was developed by US-based tech startup Listen Labs. It allowed participants to share their opinions candidly without the social pressure or judgment typically associated with human interviewers.

According to Calvert, this approach provided deeper, more authentic insights into the respondents' true feelings.

This is because a more relaxed environment was created, encouraging participants to share views they might not have expressed otherwise, resulting in richer and more honest data compared to traditional methods.

Calvert believes the AI interview format offers participants a safe environment to share minority opinions more freely.

She explained that when participants speak with real people, they may unconsciously adjust their responses to what they think the interviewer wants to hear.

In contrast, when interacting with AI, questions are presented neutrally as text on a web app, and then participants respond verbally.

This experience makes them feel as though they are talking to a mirror.

The setup also makes participants feel more at ease, allowing them to express their true feelings, much like speaking to themselves.

"This AI-driven approach amplifies the voices of respondents, especially younger generations like Gen Z and Gen Alpha, who are more open to technology and AI. It allows us to gather deeper, more accurate data," she added.

Using AI is more efficient

James Breeze, CEO of Research Network, explained that using AI in research significantly speeds up data collection.

It is reported that AI-powered data gathering is five times faster than conventional methods.

He noted that with AI, actionable insights can be generated within weeks rather than the months typically taken with traditional methods like phone or in-person interviews.

This particular study utilised Research Network's database of participants, enabling responses to be collected in just two weeks, compared to the usual nine weeks or 46 working days.

Additionally, the AI platform's data analysis is much more efficient than manual data crunching, which often takes several weeks.

Enhancing the AI platform to detect vocal cues

The team plans to enhance the AI platform by adding audio analysis to capture vocal cues like tone, speed, and hesitation.

This could provide deeper insights into participants' emotional states, offering a richer understanding of sensitive topics.

Calvert aims to apply this method to more extensive studies, gaining unique insights into Asian consumer perspectives that can benefit both businesses and policymakers.

Breeze stated, "We're pioneering a new era in understanding human emotions and beliefs. Our research will provide genuine insights that governments and industries can use to create policies that drive lasting behavioural change."

Top image from Nanyang Technological University