

Emotional Expression Among Young People in Cyprus

Cultural Influences, Social Challenges and Creative Pathways for Wellbeing

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Abstract

Emotional wellbeing has become one of the defining issues affecting young people across Europe, including Cyprus. While Cyprus continues to maintain strong family ties and close-knit communities, young people increasingly navigate academic expectations, economic uncertainty, digital transformation, and rapid social change. This paper explores the emotional landscape of young people in Cyprus, examining cultural traditions, family influences, education, social media, community life, and creative expression. It argues that non-formal education, artistic activities, and Erasmus+ programmes create valuable opportunities for young people to express emotions, strengthen resilience, and build supportive relationships.

1. Introduction

Cyprus occupies a unique position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Its history, multicultural identity and strong community values have shaped a society where relationships remain central to everyday life. Family gatherings, neighbourhood connections and the concept of 'parea' continue to play an important role in emotional support. However, alongside these strengths, young people experience growing pressure related to educational achievement, employment prospects, financial independence and social comparison through digital media.

Although discussions about mental health have become more open during recent years, many adolescents still hesitate to discuss anxiety, sadness, loneliness or fear. Emotional expression often depends on whether individuals feel accepted and safe. Understanding these realities is essential for designing youth initiatives that promote wellbeing.

2. Emotional Wellbeing in Cyprus

Research across Europe indicates rising concerns regarding stress, anxiety and emotional wellbeing among adolescents. Cypriot youth experience similar trends. Examination pressure, uncertainty regarding university admission, expectations from family, housing costs, and changing labour markets all contribute to emotional stress. At the same time,

positive emotions remain closely connected with friendships, family support, volunteering, outdoor activities and cultural traditions.

Young people frequently describe mixed emotions: hope for future opportunities alongside uncertainty; pride in their cultural identity alongside concern about global challenges. Such complexity demonstrates that emotional wellbeing is dynamic rather than fixed.

3. Cultural Influences

Cypriot culture values hospitality, solidarity and close interpersonal relationships. These traditions create protective factors that encourage belonging. Nevertheless, cultural expectations may also discourage vulnerability. Some young people feel pressure to appear resilient, while traditional gender expectations can influence how emotions are expressed. Emotional openness is gradually increasing, particularly among younger generations who participate in international mobility programmes and intercultural dialogue.

4. Schools and Youth Work

Schools increasingly integrate wellbeing initiatives, while youth organisations provide complementary non-formal learning opportunities. Erasmus+ projects encourage intercultural learning, empathy, teamwork and self-reflection. Through workshops, simulations, outdoor education and peer learning, participants develop emotional intelligence in environments where mistakes are accepted as part of learning.

5. Creativity and Emotional Expression

Art, theatre, music, dance, photography, storytelling and creative writing provide alternative languages for emotions. Many young people find it easier to express feelings through creative activities than through direct conversation. Creative methods reduce stress, improve confidence, stimulate reflection and strengthen social inclusion. Cyprus has a rich artistic heritage that combines traditional and contemporary forms of expression, offering multiple opportunities for emotional exploration.

6. Digital Life

Social media connects young people across borders but also creates unrealistic expectations regarding appearance, achievement and happiness. Fear of missing out, online comparison and cyberbullying can negatively affect wellbeing. At the same time, digital platforms can promote awareness campaigns, youth participation and peer support when used responsibly.

7. Building Safe Spaces

Families, schools, municipalities, NGOs and youth workers all contribute to emotionally safe environments. Active listening, empathy, respect, inclusion, confidentiality and creative participation encourage young people to speak openly about their experiences. Outdoor learning, volunteering and intercultural exchanges strengthen resilience and social connectedness.

8. Recommendations

Develop emotional education in schools; support youth organisations delivering non-formal education; encourage creative arts and sports; strengthen cooperation between families and schools; promote digital wellbeing; expand opportunities for Erasmus+ participation, particularly for young people with fewer opportunities.

Conclusion

Cyprus possesses strong community traditions that provide an excellent foundation for emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, modern social and technological changes create new emotional challenges that require coordinated responses. Creative expression, youth work and intercultural learning offer practical solutions that help young people understand themselves and support one another. Projects such as Feelings Unleashed demonstrate that emotional expression is not simply a personal matter but a cornerstone of inclusive, resilient and compassionate communities.

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