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Japanese kids weigh in on the difficulties of the past – www.japantoday.com

“Well, when I was a kid...” is often one of the worst things to hear someone begin a sentence with at a family gathering, isn’t it? What always follows is half-remembered, half-exaggerated grouching about how easy kids have it these days with their cellphones and games.

It’s generally agreed that life is too easy for kids these days- so easy, that many of them feel sorry for older generations. A recent survey of 200 children ranging from elementary fifth-graders to junior high school third graders asked: “What makes you think Kids long ago had it bad?”

- 1) They had class even on Saturdays. 118 children
- 2) There was no Internet. 88 children
- 3) There weren’t any fun video game systems. 71 children
- 4) There weren’t any cell phones. 68 children
- 5) There were no air conditioners. 59 children
- 6) TVs were small and black and white. 53 children
- 7) There weren’t any convenience stores. 51 children
- 8) School lunches weren’t very tasty. 45 children
- 9) They had to help around the house. 42 children
- 10) There was only one television set in the house. 41 children

When the survey appeared on the internet, Japanese Twitter users reacted quickly:

- Hey! Kids! Not one of these things is at all sad!
- Looking back, it’s strange, but I can only think that all of these things were great!
- You kids now are the ones who we should feel sorry for!
- Saturday classes were the most fun. And it was just a half-day of school!
- None of these were bad! And now I realize just how old I’ve gotten...

A lot of Twitter users actually felt sorry for the kids these days.

- None of these things were at all saddening. Aren’t today’s kids who feel they need the Internet, cell phones, video games, and convenience stores the ones we should feel sorry for?

—I just feel bad for kids these days. It's kind of weird.

—Uh, yeah, this isn't sad at all. It's those who feel these things are necessary that we should feel sorry for. Their lack of imagination is kind of scary.

—But this survey 'What makes you think "Kids long ago had it bad?"' is implying that kids long ago necessarily had it bad. It's just looking for whatever thing was the worst, so kids are just looking for appropriate answers. Doesn't mean they think life sucked back then. I don't know who made the survey, but LOL!

—The survey is asking them what things they thought were tough for kids long ago, but it doesn't mean that kids nowadays actually think life sucked then. They were just answering the survey, weren't they?

—Kids long ago had it hard, and kids these days have it hard, for different reasons. They're quite similar.

So, the responses to the survey were pretty mixed, though it is interesting to see almost no one agreeing with the kids these days. I don't know about you, but the thought of living without my cell phone sends shivers down my spine...

Finally, Japan did have school six days a week until 2002, when public schools decided that their students were working too hard, and gave them a two-day weekend. Only 17.9% of parents and guardians supported the decision.

Questions

1. Do you think that kids have it easy now? Why? Why not?
2. Which of the 10 items listed in the survey were good for you? Which were bad?
3. Did you have video games when you were a child? If yes, which ones? If no, what did you do for entertainment?
4. If you had to stop using a cell phone, would you miss it? Why? Why not?
5. How were school lunches when you were a child? Were they good? Do you think they were worse than now?
6. Do you think children these days help around the house more than when you were a child?

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