

CENTRAL POLICY UNIT
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A STUDY ON PARENTING PRACTICES
IN HONG KONG

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

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Report on Parenting Practices in Hong Kong

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Executive Summary

1. The objectives of this study are: (a) to give a comprehensive account of current parenting practices in Hong Kong; and (b) to identify factors affecting parenting practices, sources of parenting stress, impact on parent-child relationships, child development, and family functioning.
2. A multi-method research approach was used to collect data for the purposes of this study. The study includes (a) a territory-wide survey on parenting practices, information on family demographic and family functioning, as well as on child development outcomes, (b) focus group study with parents, (c) a desktop survey of the policy interventions in supporting family and parenting in four selected places and (d) consultative interviews with the stakeholders, including children, parents, employers, service providers, and policy makers.
3. The territory-wide survey was conducted between October 2015 and May 2016. Based on multi-stage sampling procedures, a total of 1510 families participated in the survey. The focus group discussion was conducted between October 2015 and June 2016. Seventy-nine parent informants participated in 15 focus groups and gave their views on the topic. Simultaneously, the desktop survey studied good practices in family and parenting support in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea. Finally, 28 stakeholders were consulted on the policy and service implications of this study.

Major Findings

4. The major findings of the Study are highlighted below:

Territory-wide Questionnaire Survey

5. Findings of the survey suggest that family structure has an effect on parenting and child outcomes. Parenting and parent-child relationship are less likely to be a problem for first marriage families, two-parent families, high SES families and one-child families. Family SES affects the outcome of most child outcomes. Parenting style, parenting practice, and parenting stress are associated with all child outcomes in this study. Also, better parenting and better parent-child relationship facilitate higher child well-being and family well-being, even though the families were in low SES. In other words, family functioning can moderate the undesirable effects of family structure and SES.

Focus Group Interviews with Parent Informants

6. Family well-being, parenting practices, and child outcomes are inter-related. A well-functioning family is a necessary condition for effective parenting and is the cornerstone of good child outcomes. Good family functioning is the key to family well-being, effective parenting practices and positive child outcomes. All of these are integrated together, meaning no single measure is enough to ensure family well-being and good child outcomes. From the ecological perspective, family well-being and good family functioning cannot be achieved without addressing the challenges presented by the environment that influences the family, like those from school and work.

Desktop Study on Supporting Families and Parenting in Different Places

7. The policies and programs on family support and parenting were studied from four places. These include the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea. A clear policy framework is found in all of these places in the form of legal framework or family policies, to help families face different developmental tasks and issues throughout the different stages. Family and parent education is organized, developed and made available for people in different stages of family development. In all four places studied, the government took up an important role and made a lot of effort in promoting cultivating values and attitudes on family and parenting.

Interviews with Stakeholders

8. A well-functioning family is a pre-requisite for good parenting and positive child outcomes, and well-functioning families are beneficial to the Hong Kong society as a whole. Besides material well-being and psycho-emotional well-being, spiritual well-being is also an important quality of strong and resilient families to tide over adversities. Supporting family and parenting require strong leadership and a clear direction. However, it should not be the responsibility of any single party. It is important to embrace the concerted efforts of neighbors and the neighborhood, schools and teachers, workplace and employers, and government and NGOs to assure good parenting and positive child outcomes.

Recommendations

9. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for the consideration of the Family Council:

Support for Families

Recommendation 1: Families should be supported to guarantee family well-being, good parenting and positive child outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Family well-being should be an important goal in family support, as it is the basis of good parenting and positive child outcomes.

Parent Education and Parenting programs

Recommendation 3: Parent education and parenting programs should be made available to parents in different stages of their life.

Recommendation 4: Reflective parenting should be promoted to help parents become more thoughtful and sensitive to their parenting practices.

Recommendation 5: Child-centred parenting programs, to help parents see their children positively and listen to them more, should be developed.

Recommendation 6: Special parent education and parenting programs should be developed and delivered to parents with special parenting needs.

Framework for family and parent education

Recommendation 7: The life stage approach should remain adopted as the framework for developing and organizing family and parent education programs.

Recommendation 8: The public health approach should be adopted to plan and implement family and parent education programs.

Recommendation 9: Family and parent education programs should be evidence-based, with proven effectiveness for their implementation

Recommendation 10: Territory-wide promotion and publicity efforts to foster positive values and attitudes towards family and parenting should be implemented.

Recommendation 11: Enhanced education programme and support should be made available to families and parents to avoid family functioning and parenting problems.

Recommendation 12: Regular surveillance on the level of family well-being, parenting competence, and common issues facing families and parents should be conducted.

Recommendation 13: Inter-sectorial collaboration should be fostered in the implementation of family and parenting education programs.

Recommendation 14: Family and pre-parenthood education should be made available to children and young people in schools and tertiary institutes.

Recommendation 15: Efforts to promote the family as a life-long learning institution should be considered as a strategy to help families cope with on-going challenges towards family life.

Developing a Supportive and Family-friendly Social Ecology for Parenting

Recommendation 16: It is suggested that a review on existing school curriculum and policies be carried out to ensure that schools possess a happy learning setting for children, in order to create less parenting stress.

Recommendation 17: School operators should consider running different varieties of schools to suit the diverse learning needs of the children.

Recommendation 18: More family-friendly initiatives to reconcile the potential conflicts between workplace and family should be in place.

Recommendation 19: NGOs, including religious organizations should be encouraged to play more active roles in family and parenting support in the community.

Recommendation 20: Collective efforts should be made to reclaim the informal social support function of neighbours and neighbourhoods conducive for positive parenting.

Recommendation 21: Kins and extended families living close to each other in the neighbourhood should be encouraged to facilitate a supportive neighbourhood network for families and parenting.

Role of the Government

Recommendation 22: The government should assume a leadership role in steering the development and implementation of family support and parenting education in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 23: The government should consider setting up a Family Development Fund to support family and parenting education in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 24: The government should take more initiatives to set a good model of family-friendly employer in Hong Kong.

Collective Responsibility and Concerted Efforts

Recommendation 25: Support for family and parenting education should be made as collective responsibilities of all concerned parties in the society.

香港家長親職實踐研究報告

行政摘要

1. 本研究的目的是：(a) 全面探討香港目前的親職實踐狀況；(b) 識別影響親職實踐、親職壓力來源、父母子女關係、兒童發展及家庭功能的因素。
2. 本研究使用了多元研究方法收集數據。當中包括：(a) 全港性的家長親職實踐、家庭人口、家庭功能、以及兒童發展情況的問卷調查，(b) 與家長進行的焦點小組討論會，(c) 從桌面研究方法探討四個國家/地區的家庭和親職支援政策，以及(d) 進行諮詢訪談，進一步了解兒童、家長、僱主、服務提供者和政策制定者等不同的持份者對家庭和親職實踐與及相關支援的看法。
3. 全港性問卷調查於 2015 年 10 月至 2016 年 5 月期間進行。問卷調查是根據多階段抽樣形式進行，共有 1510 個家庭參與。焦點小組討論於 2015 年 10 月至 2016 年 6 月期間進行，舉行了 15 個焦點小組會議，當中有 79 名家長參與，並就親職實踐這主題發表他們的意見。同時，本研究亦採用桌面調查方法分別探討了英國、新加坡、台灣及韓國有關家庭和家長支援方面良好的實務經驗。最後，一共諮詢了 28 位持份者，深化了解研究結果對家庭和親職支援上的政策和服務含意。

主要研究結果

4. 研究的主要結果如下：

全港性問卷調查

5. 調查結果顯示，家庭結構對親職實踐和兒童發展有影響。對於首次婚姻家庭，雙親家庭，社會經濟地位高的家庭和一孩家庭而言，親職實踐和父母子女關係出現問題的可能性較低。家庭經濟地位影響大多數兒童成長狀況。本研究亦發現親職實踐風格、親職實踐和親職壓力對本研究中的所有兒童各方面發展也有關聯。此外，即使家庭處於低社會經濟地位，良好的親職實踐和良好的父母子女關係有利促進更高的兒童幸福感和家庭幸福感。換句話說，家庭功能可以緩解家庭結構和社會經濟地位帶來的負面影響。

與家長進行的焦點小組訪談

6. 家庭幸福感、親職實踐和兒童各方面發展是有關聯的。一個運作良好的家庭是有效的親職實踐的必要條件，也是構建有利兒童發展的基石。擁有良好的家庭功能是家庭幸福感、有效的親職實踐和良好的兒童成長狀況的關鍵。所有這些都是息息相關，意味著沒有單一的措施足以確保家庭幸福感和良好的兒童成長狀況。從生態學的角度解釋，家庭如果不能應對來自外來環境例如

學校和職場對家庭所帶來的挑戰，家庭幸福感和良好的家庭功能就無法實現。

各地支持家庭和親職實踐的桌面研究

7. 桌面研究深入探討了英國、新加坡、台灣和韓國在支持家庭和親職實踐方面的政策和計劃。結果顯示，四個地方都有一個明確的政策框架，以法律框架或家庭政策的形式，在不同階段支持家庭成員面對不同的成長問題。無論一個家庭在任何發展階段，這些地方都有合適的家庭和家長教育提供給他們。在這四個地方，政府都擔當了重要的角色，在提倡對家庭和親職實踐的價值觀和態度方面做了很多的努力。

與持份者的諮詢訪談

8. 一個運作良好的家庭是有效的親職實踐和兒童正面成長的先決條件。運作良好的家庭對整個香港社會都有利。除了物質上的滿足、精神與情緒上的健康外，家庭成員的心靈幸福感也是強大和具柔韌力的家庭度過逆境時重要的質素。支持家庭和親職實踐的發展需要有強而有力的領導和明確的方向。然而，親職的實踐與支援不應該只是任何一方的單一責任。為確保親職的良好實踐和兒童的正面成長，鄰里和社區、學校和教師、職場和僱主以及政府和非政府組織的共同努力是非常重要的。

建議

9. 根據這項研究的結果，研究團隊提出以下建議供家庭議會審議：

家庭支援

建議 1：支援家庭以達至家庭幸福感、良好的親職實踐及正面的兒童成長。

建議 2：家庭幸福感為親職實踐及兒童正面成長的基礎，因此，提昇家庭幸福感應被訂定為家庭支援的重要目標。

家長教育與親職培訓計劃

建議 3：為處於不同人生階段的家長提供合適的家長教育及親職培訓計劃。

建議 4：推動和鼓勵反思式親職實踐，幫助家長在施行其管教方式時能夠更能慎思明辯和具敏銳力。

建議 5：提供以子女為中心的親職培訓計劃，協助家長去正面看待子女及細心聆聽子女的心聲。

建議 6：為有特殊親職需要的家長開設特殊的家長教育及親職培訓計劃。

家庭及家長教育的框架

建議 7：繼續採用生涯框架作為製定和組織家庭及家長教育計劃。

建議 8：採用公共衛生方法來規劃和實施家庭及家長教育計劃。

建議 9：以循證為基礎推行已證明具實效的家庭及家長教育計劃。

建議 10：應就著有關家庭及親職實踐的正面價值觀念和態度作全港性宣傳。

建議 11：應為家庭及家長提供更具針對性的家庭和親職教育計劃和相關支援，以預防家庭功能及親職的問題出現。

建議 12：就家庭幸福感、親職實踐能力以及家庭和父母面對的問題進行定期監測。

建議 13：促進在實施家庭和親職教育方案方面的跨部門合作。

建議 14：在學校和大專院校內為兒童及青年人提供家庭和親職預備教育課程。

建議 15：提倡家庭成為一個終身學習的地方，作為幫助家庭面對生活中持續挑戰的策略。

為親職實踐建立一個支持和家庭友好的社會生態環境

建議 16：建議檢視現時的學校課程和政策，確保學校能給予兒童一個愉快學習的地方，從而減低學業所帶來的親職壓力。

建議 17：建議學校營辦者考慮開設不同種類的學校，以配合兒童的不同學習需要。

建議 18：建議更多的家庭友好措施，以調和工作 and 家庭之間的潛在衝突。

建議 19：鼓勵非政府組織（包括宗教團體）在社區內擔當更積極的角色以支援家庭及親職的實踐。

建議 20：各方合力在鄰里及社區裡重新建立有利於親職實踐的非正式社區支援功能。

建議 21：鼓勵和促進親屬和延伸家庭在鄰近社區居住，為家庭及親職實踐建立一個支持性的鄰里網絡。

政府的角色

建議 22：政府應擔當領導角色督導家庭支援及親職教育發展，以及相關計劃的推行。

建議 23：政府應考慮成立「家庭發展基金」去支援香港家庭及親職教育的發展。

建議 24：政府應該採取主動，提供更多措施，作為「家庭友善僱主」的好榜樣。

集體責任與共同努力

建議 25：家庭支援和親職教育應成為社會各界人士和團體的共同責任。

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Appendix E	Focus Group Consent Form
Appendix F	The Five PEIP Programs

Chapter 1

Objectives of the Study

Background of the study

1.1 Parenting is a difficult task that requires life-long commitment, long-term patience, care and efforts. In addition to financial costs, it involves a lot of psychological effort. For these reasons, increasingly more couples are choosing not to bear children. In Hong Kong, the total fertility rate (TFR) in 1979 is 2.1 childbirths per woman. It dropped to a record-low level of 0.9 in 2003, and since then it has been between 1.1 and 1.3. If people are deterred from having children because of difficulties in parenting, then something needs to be done to explore what these parenting difficulties are so that measures can be devised to address people's worries over parenthood.

1.2 Parenting is important because it determines child outcomes which, in turn, is closely related to the quality of citizens. Quality of citizens includes respect for others, helping, sharing, donating, co-operating, volunteering, and following laws and orders, as well as other forms of pro-social behaviors (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2007). Nurturing these qualities relies on long term cultivation from parents to their children, from childhood to adulthood. Good parenting practices that contribute to positive child outcomes are the basis of quality citizens in the long run, because children are the future pillars of the society.

1.3 Good parenting is at the core of positive children's outcomes and development, and family is the immediate context of parenting. When family wellbeing is at stake, the capacity of parents to nurture successfully diminishes. Increasingly, overseas studies on parenting examine its relationship with family wellbeing. Also, with the understanding that families exist within a wider community, what happen outside families will also be impacting on families, hence parenting and child outcomes. Therefore, studies on parenting and child outcomes are best set within the ecology of family within which parenting is practiced.

1.4 This study aims to examine parenting practices and child outcomes, as well as the factors within and outside the families that affect these parenting practices and child outcomes in Hong Kong. It also hopes to identify the difficulties of parenting in Hong Kong and what contributes to quality parenting and child outcomes. Inherent in this study is a belief that good parenting can be achieved with family support and parent education through a better understanding of parenting practices and difficulties in Hong Kong. The set of research questions developed for this study is delineated below.

Objectives of the Study

- 1.5 This study on parenting practices in Hong Kong has the following objectives:
- a. to give a comprehensive account of current parenting practices in Hong Kong; and

- b. to identify factors affecting parenting practices, sources of parenting stress, impact on parent-child relationships, child development and family functioning.

Scope of the Study

1.6 To identify issues relating to parenting practices in Hong Kong, the scope of this study will cover the following:

- a. mapping out current parenting practices and their relationship with child's development outcomes, family relationships, and family well-being in Hong Kong;
- b. studying childrearing practices in the social, economic and cultural context of Hong Kong, and examining whether childrearing practices vary by parental socio-economic status (SES) and family structures;
- c. examining child development outcomes and analyze whether and/or how the outcomes are different from various childrearing practices;
- d. assessing the family functioning, the well-being of children and parents, sources of, and factors affecting parenting stresses, and analyse whether and/or how they vary by different childrearing practices;
- e. soliciting the views of stakeholders for an in-depth understanding of the factors affecting parenting practices and its outcomes, to explore ways to mitigate stresses from childrearing, and/or develop successful parenting strategies;
- f. drawing on the experiences of selected countries and places, and making reference to their policy interventions in the areas of family support, parent education, and family well-being;
- g. suggesting measures and services that could support childrearing, enhance child development outcomes, and family well-being for stakeholders' consideration; and
- h. providing policy recommendations for promoting positive values on family formation and raising children in Hong Kong

Methods of the Study

1.7 A multi-method research approach is used to gather data for the purposes of this study. Multi-method research approach means the combination of different research methods in a single investigation to provide comprehensive answers to address complex research questions and to offset the limitations of using one research methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2004; Singleton & Straits, 2010). Current Hong Kong scenarios of parenting practices are multi-dimensional and complex. Such complex phenomena of parenting practice in Hong Kong can only be addressed by multi-method research approach.

1.8 Essentially, the study includes a territory-wide survey, a focus group study, a desktop survey, and consultative interviews with the stakeholders. The quantitative and qualitative data were equally collected. The quantitative data were collected via a territory-wide survey on parenting practices, information on family demographic and family functioning, as well as on child development outcomes. The qualitative data were gathered through focus group interviews with parents as well as consultative interviews on stakeholders, including children, parents, employers, service providers, and policy makers. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative data collected from human subjects, this study also consists of a desktop study of the policy interventions in supporting family and parenting abroad. Methods of data collection used in this study are as follows:

Territory-wide Questionnaire Survey

1.9 The territory-wide survey was intended to cover scope (a) to (d) of this study. It was designed with a view to generating a representative sample of 2,000 families in Hong Kong for the purpose of collecting quantitative data that throw light on parenting practices, parenting stress, family functioning and relationships, child development outcomes, and the relationships between them. More details about the method used in the territory-wide questionnaire survey will be presented in the next chapter of this report.

Focus Group Discussion with Parent Informants

1.10 Focus group discussion is a qualitative research method aiming to explore or elicit participants' feelings, attitudes and perception of a selected topic or phenomenon (Edmunds, 1999; Puchta & Potter, 2004). While the questionnaire survey would provide a set of quantitative data for the general picture of family functioning, parenting practices, parenting stress, and child outcomes; an in-depth understanding of these issues based on what parent informants wanted to share with researchers rather than having them responded to a set of pre-defined questions will supplement the limitation of the questionnaire survey. Therefore, focus groups were used to explore parents' views on factors of different parenting practices and difficulties in parenting process. This will address scope (e) of this study. A more detailed elaboration of the use of focus group discussion method in this study will be presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

Desktop Study of Policy Intervention in Family and Parenting Support Abroad

1.11 This consultancy study requires the research team to identify policy interventions

and measures to supporting family and parent education abroad. To this end, this study explored the policy interventions in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea through a desktop study. The United Kingdom was selected because it is a western country with a lot of experience in family and parenting support. The other three places were chosen because they are the three “little dragons” that share a lot in common with Hong Kong in terms of socio-economic development. Desktop survey addressed scope (f) of this study and findings of the survey will be presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

Consultative Interviews with Stakeholders

1.12 The research team also interviewed various stakeholders after analyzing the results of the territory-wide questionnaires, focus group discussion with parent informants, and the desktop study. These stakeholders included children, parents, employers, service providers, and policy makers. The main findings of the study were communicated to them and their views were solicited on whether these findings are in line with their observations and understanding of the issues at hand. Attention was paid to their suggestions as to what can be done to improve family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes in Hong Kong. Consultative interviews with stakeholders addressed scope (e) and (g) of this study and their findings will be presented in Chapter 5 of this report.

Structure of this Report

1.13 This introductory chapter serves to present the background, objectives, scope, and methods of this study, and how these different parts are related to each other for the purposes of this study. Following this introductory chapter is the findings of the territory-wide questionnaire survey (Chapter 2), focus group discussion with parent informants (Chapter 3), desktop study on policy interventions in family and parenting support abroad (Chapter 4), and consultative interviews with stakeholders (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 comprises the findings from different methods of data collection in this study and discussion on the implications of these findings before it makes recommendations on policy measures to support family and parenting in Hong Kong.

Chapter 2

Territory-wide Questionnaire Survey

Introduction

2.1 The study aims to understand the current parenting practices, parenting stress, parent-child relationship as well as their impacts on child development and family well-being. To identify the current situation of parenting practices in Hong Kong (Objective 1), warmth parental styles, dysfunctional parenting practices, and parental stress were measured because they are the indexes of parenting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Hayes & Watson, 2013). The school survey showed the mean and distribution of parental warmth and dysfunctional parenting practice. With reference to previous study, it would be revealed whether parenting practices in Hong Kong have changed over the past decade.

2.2 To examine key child's developmental outcomes (Objective 2), behavioral and psychological problems, prosocial behaviors, physical health, and academic achievement were measured. Literature shows that those variables mainly cover child developmental outcomes (Cicognani et al., 2008; Ryan, & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2008). To examine the effects of parenting practices on child outcomes, simple regressions was used to analyze data. According to existing literature, it can be hypothesized that warmth parental style is positively associated with psychological health, social competence, and academic achievement of children (Steinberg, 2008; Shek, 2008).

2.3 To examine family structure (Objective 2), family SES, marriage status of parents, and the number of children in the family were measured because family are diverse in term of economic resources, structure and size (Cherlin, 2012). Family functioning was not directly measured but represented by well-beings of the parent and the child and parent-child relationship since family functioning includes parenting, psychological health and adaptive behaviors of and interpersonal interaction between parent and child (Berge, Wall, Larson, Loth, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013; Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978; Mark Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005). According to existing literature, it can be hypothesized that parenting practices are affected by family SES (Steinberg, 2008), marital status of parent (Cowan & Cowan, 2002), and the number of children in the family (Cherlin, 2012).

Parenting Variables

Parenting Style

2.4 According to Darling and Steinberg (1993), parenting styles refers to a steady composite of beliefs and attitudes that provide a context for parental behavior. Comparing

specific parenting behaviors, parenting style is general and “is not necessarily bound to a particular disciplinary outcome” (Lee, Daniels & Kissinger, 2006, p. 254). Darling and Steinberg (1993) argue that “parenting style is most usefully conceptualized as a characteristic of the parent that alters the efficacy of the parent’s socialization efforts by moderating the effectiveness of particular practices and by changing the child’s openness to socialization” (p.488).

2.5 Based on Baumrind (1971, 1989), and Maccoby and Martin (1983), parenting styles consist of two dimensions, restrictiveness or demandingness, and responsiveness. Restrictiveness or responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show control, maturity demands and supervision in their parenting; whereas responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show affective warmth, acceptance, and involvement.

2.6 Maccoby and Martin (1983) used these two dimensions to classify parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and disengaged types. Authoritative parents are warm and set limits for their children. Authoritarian parents are cold and hostile. They give little autonomy for their children. Permissive parents are warm but have little control over their children’s behaviors. Finally, disengaged parents seldom express affection toward their children and do not exercise control.

2.7 Although parenting style is often measured using Baumrind’s (1971) conceptualizations, Baumrind’s conceptualizations may not be applicable to Chinese contexts (McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998). Chao and colleagues even argued that the concepts of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles do not capture important elements of Chinese parenting style (Chao 1994; Chao & Sue 1996). They also commented that “‘authoritarian’ parenting is an incomplete concept in the characterization of Chinese parenting’ (Chao & Sue 1996, p.95). Moreover, in addition to authoritative and non-authoritative parenting styles, most Hong Kong parents also adopt other parenting styles, such as psychological control style (Shah & Waller, 2000). To investigate parenting style among the Chinese, a two-dimension conceptualization of parenting style was used (e.g., Ip, Cheung & McBride-Chang, 2008; Lim & Lim, 2004; Shek, 1999). For instance, Shek (1999) assessed parental demandingness and responsiveness and found that the association between those two dimensions of parenting styles and adolescent mental health was stronger for girls than for boys. Ip, Cheung, McBride-Chang, and Chang (2008) found that mother’s responsiveness was positively related to children’s level of social skills. In term of children’s academic achievement, Cheung and McBride-Chang (2008) found that mother’s responsiveness was related to learning motivation and school achievement of fifth grade children.

2.8 Empirically, Shek (1995) found that Restrictiveness and Responsiveness were negatively correlated and could be simplified into one dimension of warmth in Hong Kong sample. In this study, the dimension of warmth is used because such conceptualization was supported by previous study (Shek, 1995) and it enabled simplification of results.

Parenting Practice

2.9 Parenting practice is defined as specific parental behaviours (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Based on Darling and Steinberg's conceptualization (1993), parenting practice is a goal-directed behavior through which parents fulfill their parenting duties. When comparing parenting style that serves as a general context for parenting behaviors, parenting practice is domain specific. Based on previous studies (e.g., Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Lee, Daniels & Kissinger, 2006), parenting practices are considered relatively situational in nature and are influenced by parenting styles. Parental assistance during children's homework aimed at promoting a child's academic achievement is one example of a constructive parenting practice.

2.10 In the past literature, researchers who distinguished between parenting style and parenting practices (e.g., Bean et al., 2003; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Stevenson-Hinde, 1998) proposed different specific constructs of parenting practices. For instances, Dysfunctional Parenting Practice is used to measure self-reported parenting practice of Chinese parents whose children are in early childhood period (Leung, Sanders, Leung, Mak, & Lau, 2003; Leung, Fan, & Sanders, 2013).

2.11 In the older Chinese children sample, psychological control, behavioral control and Chinese indigenous parental control are proposed. Psychological control refers to "parents' attempting to control a child's activities in ways that negatively affect the child's psychological world and thereby undermines the child's psychological development" (Smetana & Daddis, 2002, p. 563). Behavioral control refers to "rules, regulations, and restrictions that parents have for their children" (Smetana & Daddis, 2002, p. 563). Chinese indigenous parental control refers to parenting practices based on Chinese indigenous parental value and belief, such as the absolute obedience of the child, and the unconditional respect for the parents (Shek 2007d).

2.12 The reasons for choosing these parenting practices in this study are: (1) previous studies documented the empirical association between these parenting practices and child outcomes in Chinese samples (e.g., Leung, Sanders, Leung, Mak, & Lau, 2003; Leung, Fan, & Sanders, 2013; Shek, 2007b, c, d; 2008c); (2) these parenting practices have been used frequently in the existing models of parenting and related research in Chinese society (Leung,

Fan, & Sanders, 2013; Shek, 2005a); and (3) these parenting practices are vital concepts for child rearing.

Parent-Child Relationship

2.13 Parent-child relationship is an important developmental context for child developmental outcomes (Shek, 1999). It is broadly defined as the relationship or interaction quality between parent and child (Choo & Shek, 2013). There are many components of Parent-Child Relationship, such as children's trust in parent, parents' trust in their children, and dysfunctional parent-child interaction (Choo & Shek, 2013; Lam, 1999; Leung et al., 2014).

2.14 Empirically, a warm, supportive, and open parent-child relationship contributes to an healthy psychological and behavioral development of adolescents (Demham, Workman, Cole, Weissbrod, Kendziora, & Zahn-Waxler, 2000) and is positively related to parenting processes (Shek, 2005). Since there is very limited ecologically valid conceptualization of parent-child relationship in the Chinese sample, especially those applicable to very young Chinese children, dysfunctional parent-child interaction was adopted in this study because 1) it correlates with child developmental outcomes in Chinese; 2) it represents an overall assessment of the relationship quality between parents and children; and 3) there was corresponding validated measure available (Lam, 1999; Leung et al., 2014).

2.15 The children's perceived parent-child relational quality for children of age 9 or above are also included. Given that children's perceptions and understanding of relationship with their parents might be different from those of the parents (Fok & Shek, 2011; 2013). The inclusion of children's perception enables a comparison between parents and children and provides an all-around picture regarding perceived Parent-Child Relationship (Choo & Shek, 2013; Shek, 2008).

Parenting Stress

2.16 Parenting stress is conceptualized as the parents' perception or feeling that the changes and demands associated with parenting exceeds their available resources (Leung & Tsang, 2010). Parenting stress is a key factor that influences a child's well-being (Mulsow, Caldera, Pursley, Reifman, & Huston, 2002). As a construct, parenting stress consists of multiple components, which includes the characteristics of the child, parent, and context in Western societies (Abidin, 1992; Reitman, Currier, & Stickle, 2002; Webster-Stratton, 1990).

2.17 In Chinese samples, parental distress is often used, because parental distress was proven to be applicable in Chinese culture and to have predictive power of Chinese children's disruptive behaviour. Moreover, validated Chinese assessment tool is available (i.e., Parental

Distress (PD) subscale from the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) (Lam, 1999; Leung & Tsang, 2010; Leung, Tsang, & Heung, 2014).

Parental Well-Being

2.18 Theoretically, there is no general consensus for the components of Parental Well-Being. However, many scholars agree that Parental Well-Being should, at least, refer to parents' general perception or assessment on their own quality of life as a results of parenthood (Au et al., 2014; Ngai, Chan, & Holroyd, 2007; Ohan, Leung, & Johnston, 2000). Scholars argued that Parental Well-Being consists of parental self-esteem, parental self-efficacy, parental satisfaction, and parental sense of competence (Ngai, Chan, & Holroyd, 2007; Ohan, Leung, & Johnston, 2000).

2.19 Empirically, past studies have consistently shown the significant impacts of parenting self-esteem on parental processes and child developmental outcomes. For example, maternal satisfaction on parenting role have been found to exhibit a harmonious parenting style and was reported to have less child behavior problems (Ohan et al., 2000). Parental sense of competency was negatively correlated with problematic behaviors in children, maternal depression, positively with quality of parenting, and child's cognitive and psychosocial development (Luoma et al., 2001; Rogers & Matthews, 2004; Sanders & Woolley, 2005).

2.20 In this study, Parental sense of competency is chosen as an index of Parental Well-Being because (1) it is applicable to Chinese parents, (2) was positively correlated with other index of Parental Well-Being, such as parental self-esteem, and (3) there is a corresponding validated measure available (Ngai, Chan, & Holroyd, 2007).

Child Well-Being Variables

2.21 Based on the definition of health stated by the World Health Organization, Child Well-Being is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social development of a child and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948). In order to investigate the impacts of current parenting practices on child well-being in Hong Kong, behavioral and psychological problems, prosocial behavior, physical health, academic competence or learning competence, school motivation or academic self-concepts were assessed in this study. Adopting these variables enables us to have comprehensive pictures of child development (Cicognani et al., 2008; Ryan, & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Steinberg, 2008).

Behavioral and Psychological Problems

2.22 Behavioral and psychological problems are defined as a state generally associated with subjective psychological distress, disability, and problems or symptoms that occur in an individual (Ridner, 2004; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Shek, 2000). The absence of behavioral and psychological problems does not necessarily mean the presence of well-being in a child, but it is an important component of a child's well-being based on the bio-medical model of health (Ryff & Singer, 1998).

2.23 Since there are numerous dimensions of behavioral and psychological problems for a child, it is nearly impossible to measure all in a single study (DSM-V, 2013). This study adopts the conceptualization of strengths and difficulties questionnaire which assesses four aspects of behavioral and psychological problems (i.e., emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer relationship problems) (Lai et al., 2010). It is because: 1) this conceptualization provides a wide range of coverage of behavioral and psychological problems in a child; 2) the problems or distress covered in this conceptualization are intrinsic to many forms of psychological disorders and symptoms (such as internalizing problems, depression and suicide) (Goodman et al, 2010); 3) there are lots of researches supporting this conceptualization in children and adolescents (e.g., Deighton, Croudace, Fonagy, Brown, Patalay, & Wolpert, 2014; Wolpert, Cheng, & Deighton, 2015); 4) it is applicable to Chinese children (Lai et al., 2010); and 5) there is a corresponding validated measure available (Lai et al., 2010).

Prosocial Behaviors

2.24 Social development is an important domain of child development (Steinberg, 2008). One significant index of social development is prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2007). Prosocial behavior refers to a social behavior that is expected to benefit other people or society as a whole, such as helping, sharing, donating, co-operating, and following rules and regulations (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2007). Prosocial behavior is included in this study because 1) it is important for peer relationship and friendship development (Steinberg, 2008); 2) it is an important determinant of social functioning of a child (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989); and 3) there is a corresponding validated measure available for very young Chinese children (Lai et al., 2010).

Physical Health

2.25 Physical Health is the condition of a person's body that is associated with fitness, symptoms, signs of disease, wellness, and the ability to perform daily activities and physical roles in a society (Bowling, 2002). Traditionally, the concepts of perceived physical health can be complicated as they might be affected by several interrelated variables, including self-related constructs (e.g. self-efficacy, self-esteem, perceived control over life) and

subjective evaluations could be influenced, in theory, by cognitive mechanisms (e.g. expectations of life, level of optimism or pessimism, social and cultural values, aspirations, standards for social comparisons of one's circumstances in life).

2.26 In this study, a basic conceptualization of Physical Health is adopted based on relevant literature from nursing and behavioral medicine (Bergner, 1985; Larson, 1999; Ware, 1987). Five items were created to assess the perceived Physical Health of a child because they cover a wide range of symptoms, signs of disease and wellness of a child and they are supported by previous literatures (Eriksson, Undén & Elofsson, 2001; Eisen et al, 1979; Lundberg & Manderbacka, 1996; Varni, Limbers & Burwinkle, 2007).

Self-Esteem

2.27 Self-esteem is defined as a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth (Rosenberg, 1965). It is one of most important determinants of mental health in children and it represents a significant aspect of positive mental health attributes (Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996; Keyes, Shmofkin, & Ryff, 2002). Therefore, it is adopted in this study for children of age 9 or above to provide additional data for mental health.

Academic or Learning Competence

2.28 There is no consensus among scholars for the definitions of academic or learning competence (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999). For some scholars, perceived academic or learning competence might refer to “academic self-efficacy” in the vocational psychology literature and has been extensively studied in terms of how it affects academic retention (e.g., Gore, 2006; Robbins et al., 2004) and academic performance (e.g., Robbins et al., 2004). For other scholars, it is about academic ability or psychosocial skills that are needed for academic performances (Wentzel, 1993).

2.29 In this study, the conceptualization of Behavior Academic Competence is adopted for children aged 3 to 8. Behavior academic competence consists of sense of competence, persistence, initiative, and coping (Leung, Lo, & Leung (2012). These academic ability or psychosocial skills are necessary for learning and academic performance in early childhood or primary school settings (Leung, Lo, & Leung, 2012; Leung et al., 2014; Luiz et al., 2004). There are two reasons this conceptualization was used for children aged 3 to 8 in this study. First, this conceptualization is applicable to young children in Hong Kong. Second, there is a corresponding validated measure available for young age children in Hong Kong (Leung, Lo, & Leung (2012; Leung et al., 2014)

2.30 The conceptualization of Learning Competence was adopted in children aged 9 and above. Mo, Wong and Lau (2010) created this conceptualization of learning competence to

assess children's psychosocial skills for academic performance in secondary schooling in Hong Kong. Learning Competence includes creative thinking, critical thinking and problem solving. Adopting this conceptualization of Learning Competence in this study has three advantages. First, this conceptualization is applicable to children aged 9 and above in Hong Kong. Second, there is corresponding validated measure for children aged 9 and above in Hong Kong. Third, this conceptualization enables comparisons of findings in this study and studies from Education Bureau's Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (2nd Version).

Academic Self-concept

2.31 Conceptually, Academic Self-concept is closely related to Academic or Learning Competence (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999). Academic Self-concept is children's perception of themselves in academic life. More specifically, academic self-concept is children's attitudes, feelings and knowledge about their abilities, skills, appearance, and social acceptability in academic settings (Byrne, 1984; Marsh, Byrne, & Shavelson, 1988). Since academic self-concept were found to be predictive in children's academic performance in many studies (e.g., Marsh et al., 2005; Seaton, Parker, Marsh, Craven & Yeung, 2014), it was adopted in this study to provide additional information for learning in children aged 9 and above.

School Motivation

2.32 Motivated students are more likely to engage, persist, and expend effort on learning than the unmotivated ones (Schmidt, 2007). In general, there are two types of School Motivation, performance motivation and learning motivation. Performance motivation is about validation of one's ability; whereas learning motivation is about striving to learn and to master. In early childhood and primary school setting, learning motivation (i.e., task and effort) was found to be particularly important as it was related to be predictive in children's reading skills (Salonen, Lepola, & Niemi, 1998) and mathematics learning (Aunola, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2006). In this study, learning motivation (i.e., Task and Effort) was adopted for Children aged 3 to 8 to provide additional information for learning. Task refers to a type of learning motivation in which students feel interested in learning a particular task; whereas effort refers to a type of learning motivation in which students are willing to spend time and effort for self-improvement and learning (Watkins, McInerney, & Lee, 2002). There are three reasons for using this conceptualization. First, it is applicable to young Chinese children. Second, this conceptualization represents important intrinsic value of learning (Watkins, McInerney, & Lee, 2002). Third, there is a corresponding validated measure available for parents of young children in Hong Kong (Leung & Lo, 2013; Leung et al., 2014).

Other Family Structure Variables

2.33 To examine family structure, we measured family SES, marriage status of parents, the number of children in the family and whether the family is an immigrant family or not, because families are diverse in term of economic resources, structure and size (Cherlin, 2012; Steinberg, 2008). These variables serve as important ecological context for the impacts of parenting processes in child development (Berge, Wall, Larson, Loth, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013; Mark Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005; Steinberg, 2008). As a result, these variables were included in this study.

Family Well-Being

2.34 Family well-being is difficult to define and scholars have different conceptualization of family well-being (Zimmerman, 2013). In general, family well-being is a broad concept which covers various aspects of the living conditions of an individual or a family (Noor et al., 2014). To some scholars, family well-being involves a balanced development of individuals and families in terms of the physical, spiritual, economic, social, and mental areas (e.g., America's Children, 2009; Canadian Index of Well-Being, 2010). To other researchers, family well-being consists of the access to basic needs and facilities such as adequate shelter, quality schools, health care, and a safe environment (Noor et al., 2014). Relationships among family members and family processes, such as communication among family members, solving problems among family members, and parenting, are also included in family well-being (e.g., Zubrick et al. 2000). In Chinese society, perceived relationship among family members, their happiness, and their health are regarded as the main component of family well-being (Wang et al., 2015). Following this Chinese conceptualization of family well-being, family well-being was measured by summarizing the indexes of parent and child well-being in this study.

Method

Samples

2.35 The research population comprises parents with children between the age of 3 and 14 in Hong Kong. They were invited to take part in the survey via a probability sampling of students in Kindergartens, from K1 to K3, students in primary schools of all grades, and students in middle schools from Secondary 1 to 3, and the parents of those students. Given the short duration of the study, the sampling of parent and child respondents was based on schools and kindergartens. Another reason that we accessed the research population from

schools and kindergartens is because the Gross Enrolment Ratio¹ at kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels in Hong Kong is up to 100% (CMAB, 2014). Therefore, schools were convenient places to contact children as well as their parents and ensure the response rate.

2.36 A two-stage probability sampling (Levy & Lemeshow, 2013) was used in drawing a sample of around 2000 students. According to the number of variables included in the present study, to achieve an acceptable statistical power and median effect size, 625 completed valid data sets are required (Westland, 2010). With consideration of the potential cluster effect in cluster sampling that erodes statistical power, the effective sample size of 625 requires 954 cases to achieve the same statistical efficiency as random sampling (Killip, Mahfoud, & Pearce, 2004). Hence, it is reasonable to target a sample size of 2000 with anticipation of a medium response rate from schools and parents. Consents of participation were obtained from kindergartens and schools, as well as from the parents or guardian of the child participants. In addition, consents were obtained from participants not younger than 9 years old (Primary 4 or above) because they were asked to complete questionnaires as well.

2.37 In the first stage, stratified cluster sampling was adopted (Sedgwick, 2013). The strata were the 18 districts in Hong Kong and the cluster was a kindergarten or a school. The number of children recruited from each district was proportional to the population size of children aged 3~14 in each district of Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). One or two kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools in each district were randomly drawn from the school list by district (Education Bureau, 2013). Schools sampled in the first stage were invited by letter and follow-up telephone calls to participate in this study (Appendix A).

2.38 In the second stage, random sampling was adopted. A proportionate number of participants at each age in each district were randomly drawn from the sampled kindergartens or schools. Children were numbered or indicated by their student number, and the random selection programs in the excel sheet was used to conduct the random selection. Parents and students of families sampled in the second stage were invited by letter (Appendix B) to obtain their consent (Appendix C) to participate in this study.

2.39 If students come from divorced, separated, single-parent family or the students are raised by other care-givers, the caregivers who fulfill the parenting duties, such as step-parents, uncle, or grandparents, were invited to join the study.

¹ The Gross Enrolment Ratio is defined as “Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year”.

2.40 To increase the response rate, a trained research assistant contacted the selected schools and selected families to explain the importance, objectives, and privacy issues. The trained research assistant also encouraged and provided necessary help (e.g., explain the meaning of some items in the questionnaire) to facilitate the selected participants to give their honest responses.

2.41 The period of participant recruitment and data collection was from October 2015 to May 2016. A total of 1510 children and their parents agreed to participate in the survey. Proportions of children at each age and in each district were shown in Annex 1, together with corresponding proportion from the Hong Kong population (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). No significant differences were found for proportions of each age ($t(11) = 0.98, p = 0.92$) and each district ($t(17) = 0.03, p = 0.97$) between our sample and the Hong Kong population. These results suggest that the sample in this survey is a representative of the population in terms of age and district distribution.

Instruments

2.42 The study measures variables regarding parenting practices and family functioning and variables regarding child development outcomes. The total sample consists of two groups. The first group includes families with children aged 8 and below. In this group of families, only parents were required to fill the questionnaire about parenting variables and child developmental outcomes. Asking for parent report on the development of a very young child is a common practice in research (e.g., Rothbart et al., 2001) and is justifiable on the ground that the literacy and cognitive levels of the young children are limited and may therefore affect their comprehension of the questionnaire items and the quality of data so obtained. The second group consists of families with children aged 9 to 14. In this group, both parents and children were required to fill the questionnaire. Parents were required to fill the questionnaire on parenting variables; whereas children were required to complete a questionnaire about parenting variables and child developmental outcomes. All variables are measured using locally validated instruments with good psychometric properties as far as possible.

2.43 The variables of interest in this study are measured with locally validated tools. The table in Appendix D shows the variables and corresponding items in the questionnaires. Essentially, these data are collected via a parent questionnaire and a child questionnaire (for children aged 9~14 only). Instruments used in the survey are listed below:

Parenting Variables

Parenting Style (completed by both parents and children aged 9~14)

2.44 The *Parental Treatment Scale (PTS)-parent version*, originated from the Parent Image Differential (Shek, 1995), was used to examine parenting style. The PTS-parent version consists of 15 items. The Paternal Treatment Scale was completed by the father and the Maternal Treatment Scale was filled by the mother, or completed by the child (PTS-children version) with father or mother as the rated target. Respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of their own parenting styles on 7-point scales (for details of these items, see Shek, 1995). Leung, McBride-Chang and Lai (2004) found that the scale was reliable and valid in Chinese sample ($\alpha=.78$). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were also good, ranging from .77 to .89. A higher PTS scale score or MTS scale score indicates higher parental warmth.

Parenting Practices (completed by both parents)

2.45 How parents interacted with and responded to the child daily in life was measured. Parenting practice is defined as specific parental behavior. It is a goal-directed behavior through which parents fulfill their parenting duties (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Dysfunctional parenting practices were identified to help understand the influences of parenting on child's behavioral outcomes. For this purpose, the *Parenting Scale (PS)* was used to measure parenting practices of the Hong Kong parents. PS contains 30 items measuring three factors relating to parenting practices, namely, Laxness (permissive discipline), Over-reactivity (authoritarian discipline, displays of anger, meanness and irritability), and Verbosity (overly long reprimands or reliance on talking) measured on a 7-point scale. Due to low internal reliability of the verbosity subscale in HK samples (e.g., Leung et al., 2004, Leung et al., 2013), only subscales of laxness and over-reactivity were used in this survey. Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were good, ranging from .63 to .78. A higher score of PS indicates more dysfunctional parenting practice.

Parenting Practice Rated by Children (completed by children aged 9~14)

2.46 The *Parental Behavioral Control Scale (PBC)*, *Parental Psychological Control Scale (PPS)*, and *Chinese Parental Control Scale (CPS)* developed on the basis of indigenous concepts of Chinese parenting were used to assess children's perception of parental practice in terms of behavioral control, psychological control, and parental control, with a higher score indicating a higher level of parental control. Children rated their perceived parental control from the father and the mother separately. Past studies indicated the items in these scales were reliable and valid in Hong Kong context (Shek, 2006; 2007). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from 0.79 to 0.87.

Parental Stress (completed by both parents)

2.47 *Parental Stress Index (PSI)* was used to assess the parental stress of the parent respondents. The PSI consists of 36 items. Respondents were asked to rate with items related to parental stress on 5-point scales. The Chinese version of this scale had been validated for use with Hong Kong parents. The reliability was shown to be good from past local studies (Lam, 1999; Leung, Tsang, & Heung, 2014). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from .82 to .89. A higher score of PSI indicates a higher level of parental stress.

Parent-Child Relationship

Parent-Child Relationship (completed by both parents)

2.48 Interacting styles and perceived relationships between parents and child was measured. The *Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI)* was used to assess parent-child relationship from the parents' perspective. There are 12 items. Respondents were asked to rate parent-child interaction on 5-point scales. The Chinese version of this scale had been validated for use with Hong Kong parents. The reliability was shown to be good in past local study (Lam, 1999; Leung et al., 2014). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from .82 to .85. Reversed scores of the scale were used in this survey. A higher score indicates better parent-child relationship.

Parent-child Relational Quality (completed by children aged 9~14)

2.49 The 24-item *Parent-child Relational Qualities Scale (RQI)* was used to measure parent-child relational qualities (satisfaction with parental control, child's readiness to communicate with the parents, and perceived mutual trust between parents and their children) from the children's perspective. Children rated their relationship with their father and their mother separately. Shek (2008) indicated that the scales were reliable and valid in the Hong Kong sample. Reliabilities of the scale rated for father and mother were 0.90 and 0.90, respectively. A higher score indicates better parent-child relationship.

Parent Well-being (completed by both parents)

2.50 Parent well-being was indicated by parents' happiness resulting from their satisfaction with the parent role. The *Parent Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)* was used to assess parent well-being in a family; because parental competence was highly correlated with parental self-efficacy which is a major contribution to subjective well-beings of parents (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Silver et al., 2006). There are 16 items measuring parental satisfaction and self-efficacy of parents. Respondents were asked to rate their feelings of being satisfied with and qualified to the role of parent on 6-point scales. The Chinese version of this scale has been validated for use in Hong Kong with good internal reliability (Leung et al., 2004).

Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were good, ranging from .72 to .78. A higher score indicates better parent well-being.

Child Well-being Outcomes

Psychological health of children (completed by parents)

2.51 The *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)-parent-version* was used to measure the psychological health of the children. The questionnaire contains 25 items with 5 sub-scales (i.e., emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and pro-social behavior). Respondents rated children's behaviors on 3-point scales. The Chinese version was translated and validated by Lai et al. (2010). Lai et al. (2010) found that SDQ had acceptable internal reliability, good test-re-test reliability, and good discriminative validity. The prosocial subscale was used to assess prosocial behaviors; scores of other subscales of problems were used to assess behavioral and psychological problems. Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from .81 to .82. The SDQ provides a problem score, which is the sum of the first four subscales, and a prosocial score representing the last subscale. The two scores represent behavioral and psychological problem, and prosocial behaviors, respectively.

Physical health (completed by parents for children aged 3~8 and by both parents and children of age 9~14)

2.52 Physical Health of Children would be assessed by five self-construct items (e.g., how many times your children have visited medical doctor because of physical illness in the past 12 months). Respondents rated health-related items on 5-point scales. Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were acceptable, ranging from .64 to .70. Higher scores indicate better physical health.

Behavior Academic Competence Scale (completed by parents of children aged 3~8)

2.53 This was measured by the *Behavior Academic Competence Scale (BAC)*. The scale consists of 15 items on sense of competence, persistence, initiative, and coping. The respondents rated the scale on a 4-point scale (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, 4=always). The Chinese version was developed and validated by Leung, Lo and Leung (2012) and used with acceptable psychometric property in the past local studies (Leung et al., 2014). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from .85 to .86. Higher scores indicate higher academic competence.

Learning Motivation (completed by parents of children aged 3~8)

2.54 This was measured by the *Inventory of School Motivation (ISM)*. There are three sub-scales with 17 items. They are Effort subscale, Task subscale, and Competition subscale. The Chinese version for parents was developed and validated by Leung and Lo (2013) with good reliability ($\alpha=.87$). The validity and applicability of the scales in Chinese sample was further supported by Leung et al. (2014). Reliabilities of the scale in this survey were high, ranging from .86 to .87. Higher scores indicate higher learning motivation.

Self-Esteem (completed by children of age 9~14)

2.55 *Self-esteem* was used to measure the self-concept of the children as an outcome of parenting. Children rated the 10-item scale of explicit self-esteem on a 4-point likert scale (1 = totally disagree, 4 = totally agree); the higher the values, the higher the explicit self-esteem an individual achieves. Shek, Chan, and Lee (2005) suggested the scale was reliable and valid in the Hong Kong sample. Reliability of the scale in this survey was .83. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

Academic self-concept (completed by children of age 9~14)

2.56 The 5-item *Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASC)* of Education Bureau's Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (2nd Version) was used to measure the Academic Self-Concept of the children. Respondents rated on 4-point scales. The internal reliability of this scale was .80. Higher scores indicate better academic self-concept.

Learning Competency (completed by children of age 9~14)

2.57 The 21-item *Learning Competency Scale (LCS)* of the Education Bureau's Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (2nd Version) was used to measure the learning competence of the children. Respondents rated on 4-point scales. The scale includes three sub-scales, namely, creative thinking, critical thinking and problem solving. Each sub-scale was developed and validated by Mok, Wong and Lau (2010). The reliabilities of the scales were good ($\alpha = .86$ for creative thinking, $\alpha = .77$ for critical thinking, and $\alpha = .87$ for problem solving). Reliability of LCS in this survey was .91. Higher scores indicate higher learning competence.

Demographic Variables (completed by both parents)

2.58 Demographic variables related to family structures were measured. Those variables include the parents' age, education levels, and marital status, as well as family incomes, number of children in the family, number of years the parent has lived in Hong Kong, and if the family has both parents or a single parent.

Summary of Data Analysis

2.59 The results consist of seven parts. In part 1, the descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, and data distribution for demographic information representing family structures, including local family, one-child family, number of children in the family, first marriage family, and single parent family were presented. Also presented were descriptive statistics of parenting variables including parental warmth, parental stress, and dysfunctional parenting practice (part 2); descriptive statistics of parent-child relationship (part 3); and family well-being including parent well-being and child well-being outcomes (part 4). Part 5 presented inferential statistics on how family structures affect parenting, parent-child relationship, and child outcomes. The relationship between parenting and child outcomes were presented; and between parenting and family or child well-being were presented in part 6 and part 7, respectively. How parenting mediates effects between family structures and family or child well-being was presented in part 8. Possible and actual score ranges of each scale are shown in Annex 2.

2.60 One conceptualization of Family well-being is the sum of well-being of individuals in the family (Behnke & MacDermid, 2004). Similar definitions present family well-being as an overarching term referring to individual well-being of family members and the quality of relationship between family members (Fahey, Keilthy, & Polek, 2012; McKeown, Pratschke, & Haase, 2003). Therefore, family well-being is conceptualized as an umbrella term for parent well-being and child well-being. Because well-being involves multiple valuations one makes regarding his or her life (Diener, 2006), a person's affects, feelings of competence, psychological health, and physical health may all contribute to his or her well-being. Therefore, with the above measures, the concept of parent well-being consist of parent's sense of competence and comfort, and the construct of child well-being comprise psychosocial success, physical health, and academic success for children aged 3 to 8; the three aspects as well as self-esteem for children aged 9 to 14.

2.61 Family Functioning refers to structural properties and interpersonal interactions of family members (Berge, Wall, Larson, Loth, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013). In operationalization, family functioning includes parenting, psychological health and adaptive behaviors of parent and child (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978; Mark Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005). Factor analysis of family functioning showed three dimensions which are: relationship among family members, personal development and well-being of family members, and structure maintenance of the family (Bloom, 1985). As well-being of family members and parent-child relationship are major components of both family well-being and family functioning, it is assumed that the two concepts are largely overlapped in conceptual

construct. Therefore, we focus on family well-being only to avoid unnecessary duplication of results.

Results

2.62 There are a total of 69 participating schools including 24 kindergartens, 23 primary schools and 22 secondary schools. Out of the 2000 sets of questionnaires that have been sent out, 1510 sets were received. The response rate is 75.5%.

Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Information

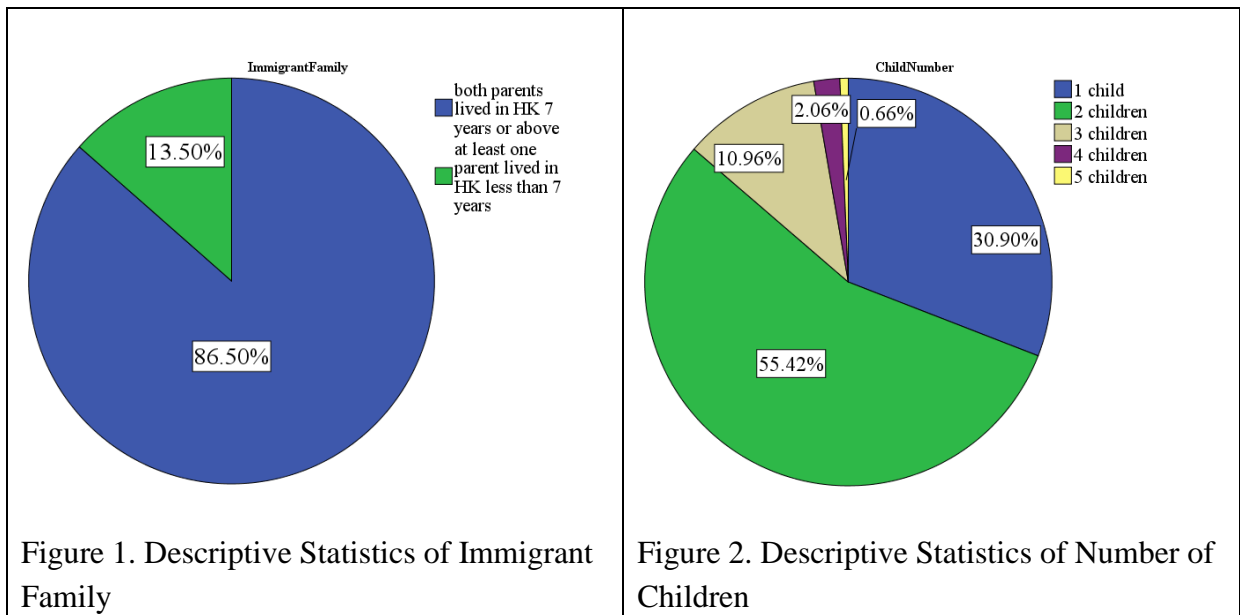
2.63 The mean age for fathers was 44.39 with standard deviation at 7.74; mean age for mothers was 39.84, with standard deviation at 6.20. Table 1 shows percentages of fathers and mothers in each age group.

Table 1. Age Distributions of Fathers and Mothers

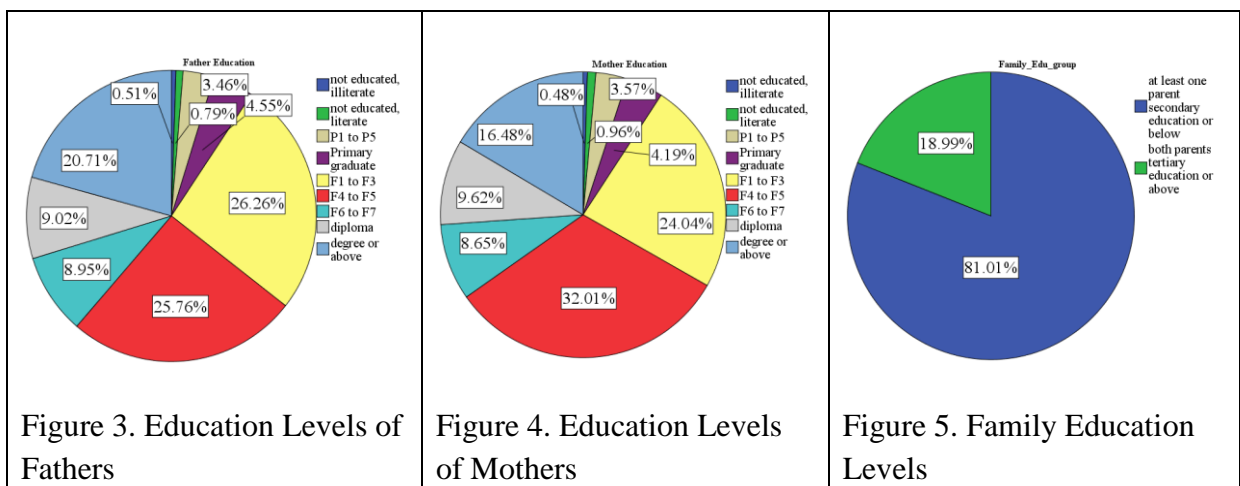
Age	Fathers	Mothers
21~30	2.5%	6.6%
31~40	28.9%	47.9%
41~50	48.0%	40.9%
51~60	18.3%	4.3%
61 and above	2.3%	0.3%

2.64 If a parent had been living in Hong Kong for more than seven years, then he or she is described as a local parent. If both parents have lived in Hong Kong for more than seven years, then the family is said to be a local family. On the contrary, a family is described as non-local family or immigrant family, if one or both parents had been living in Hong Kong for less than seven years. Figure 1 below shows that among the 1510 families, 13.50% families are immigrant family and 86.50% families are local family.

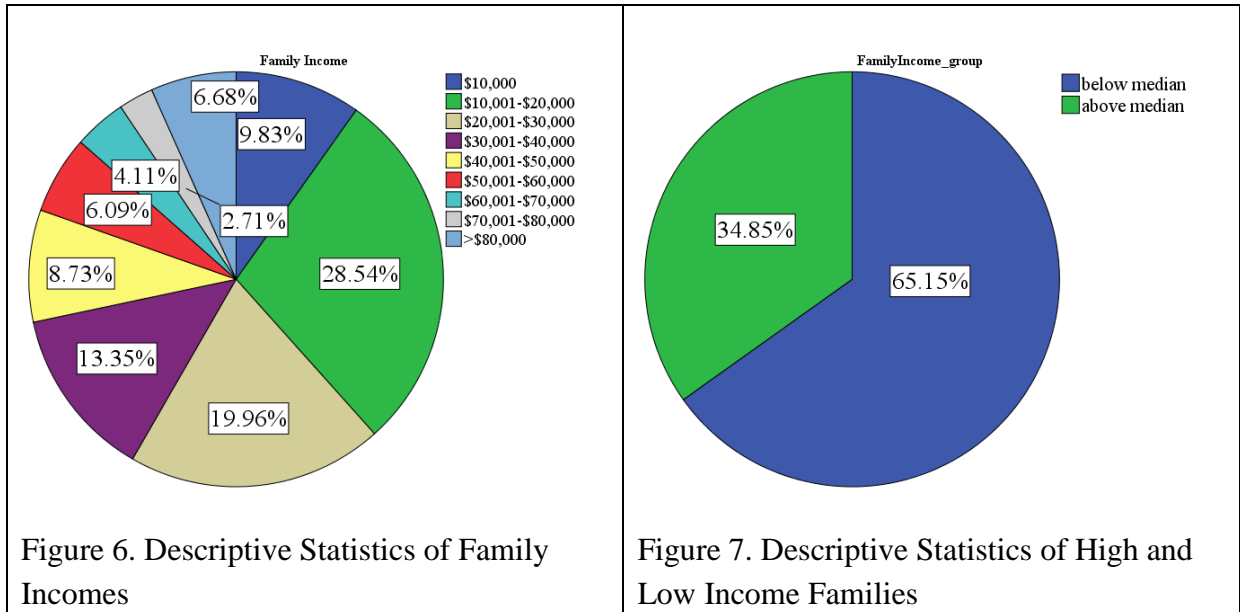
2.65 The number of children was recorded for each participating family. Figure 2 shows that more than half of them have two children. One-child family takes up 30.90% of the family investigated.



2.66 Education of parents is shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. It shows that 29.73% fathers and 18.27% mothers have received tertiary education or above. If a parent has received secondary education or below, he or she was coded as “low education”, and “high education” was coded for a parent who has received tertiary education or above. If both parents were coded with “high education”, the family was coded as “high education family”, otherwise “low education family” was coded for families with at least one parent secondary education or below. Figure 5 shows that 18.99% families were with parents of high education.



2.67 Family incomes are shown in Figure 6. About half of the families earned income between 10,000HKD and 30,000HKD. According to the median family income (foreign domestic helpers included) by household size from Hong Kong Quarterly Report on General Household Survey for the fourth quarter of 2015 when data were collected, families were coded as high (or low) income family if their incomes were above (or below) the median income of their corresponding household size. Figure 7 shows that 65.15% of the families in the survey had income lower than the median.



2.68 The socioeconomic status (SES) of a family was indicated by the family education levels and family incomes. Figure 8 shows that 60.98% of the families had low education levels and low incomes (low SES), and 16.37% families had high education levels and high incomes (high SES).

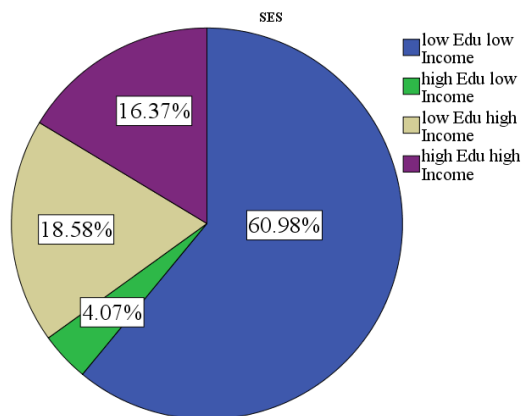
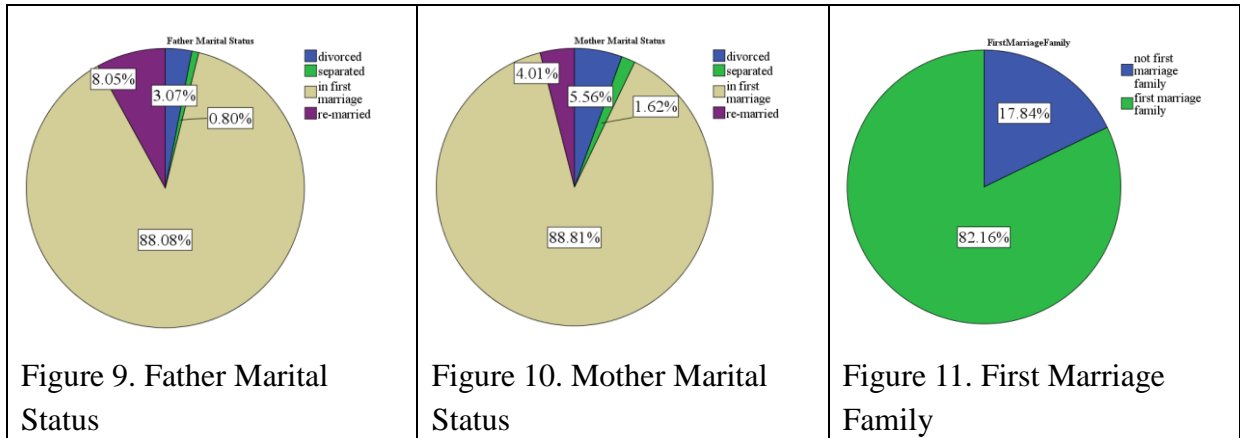


Figure 8. Descriptive Statistics of Family Socioeconomic Status

2.69 The marriage status of fathers and mothers are shown in Figure 9 and Figure 10. Around 88% of the fathers and mothers were in their first marriage. Re-married fathers (8.05%) were about twice as the re-married mothers (4.01%). If both father and mother were in their first marriage, the family was coded as “first marriage family”. Figure 11 shows that 82.16% families were first marriage families.



2.70 If a child was living with only the father or the mother who was divorced or separated, the family was coded as a “single parent” family. Figure 12 shows that 138 families (9.14%) in the survey were single parent families. Among those families, 33 families were single-father families and 105 families were single-mother families.

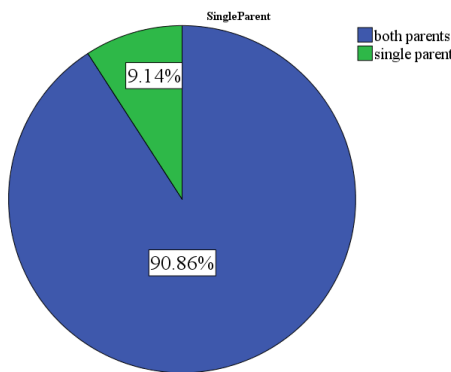


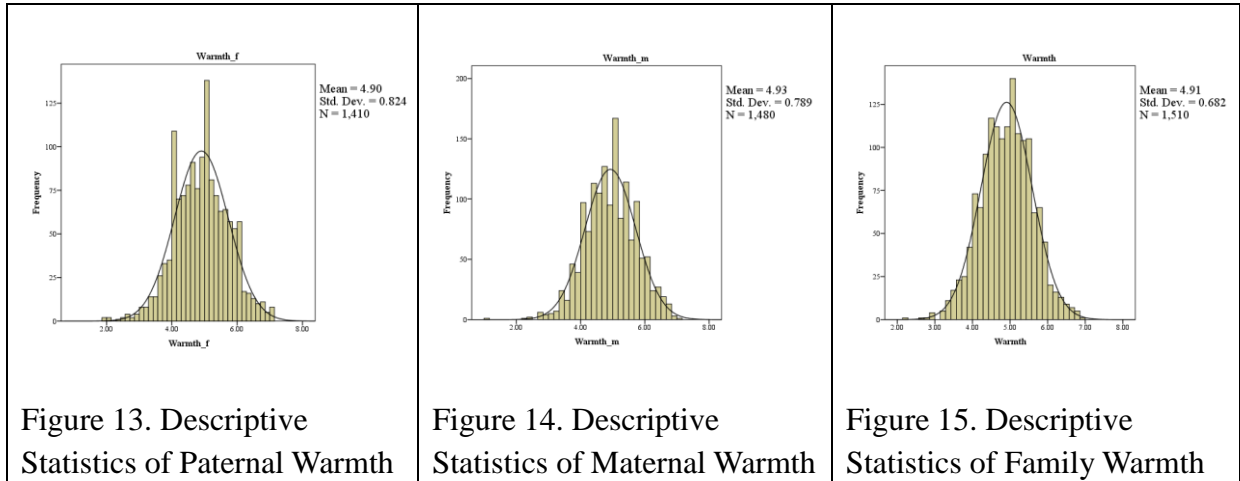
Figure 12. Descriptive Statistics of Single Parent Family

Descriptive Statistics of Parenting Variables

Warmth Parenting

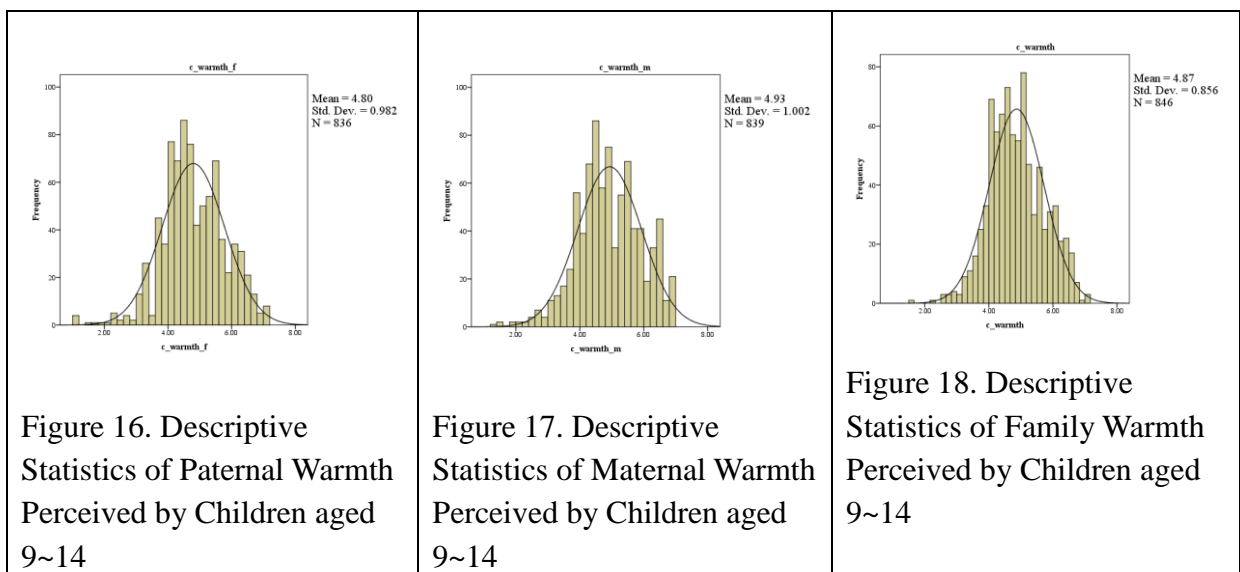
2.71 Parenting style is defined as a steady composite of beliefs and attitudes that provide context for parental behavior. In general, parenting style represent a constellation of parental attitudes towards the child which creates an emotional climate or shapes the emotional relationships between parent and child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In the current study, Parental Treatment Scale was used to assess parenting style in Hong Kong because this scale was validated in local context (Shek, 1995). The parental treatment scale contains two subscales- concern and harshness. An overall parental warmth score can be calculated by averaging all the items of parental treatment scale since a typical categorization of parenting style is warmth vs. harshness, which are the two opposite poles of one dimension. Parenting style is indicated by parental warmth that consists of parent concern and reversed parent

harshness. Family parenting style is the average of paternal warmth and maternal warmth. Figure 13~15 shows the frequency distribution, and mean and standard deviation of paternal warmth, maternal warmth, and overall family parental warmth. No difference was observed between paternal and maternal warmth.



2.72 A study conducted by Shek (2000) with a sample size of 429 has shown that the mean scores for paternal, maternal, and family parental warmth were 4.57, 4.64, and 4.60 respectively. In this survey, the mean scores for paternal, maternal and family parental warmth were 4.90, 4.93, and 4.91 respectively. It is suggested that warmth parenting has slightly increased during the past fifteen years.

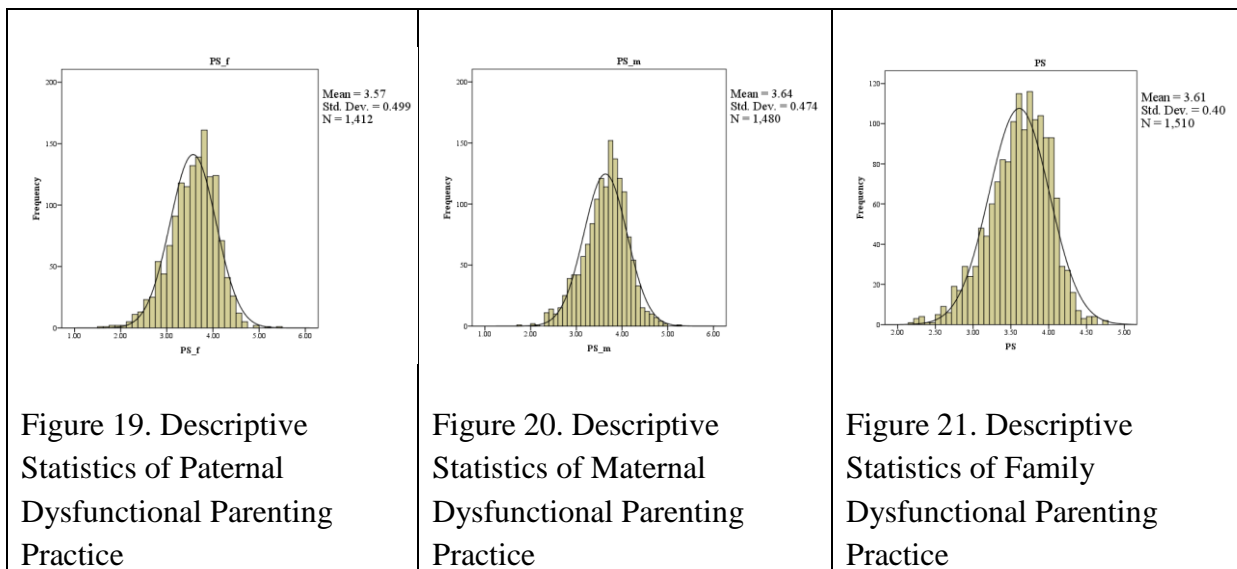
2.73 Children aged 9~14 also rated parental warmth for the father and the mother. Figure 16~18 shows frequency distribution and mean and standard deviation of paternal warmth, maternal warmth, and overall family parental warmth perceived by children. The child perceived maternal warmth were higher than paternal warmth ($t(828) = 3.85, p < .001$).



2.74 While comparing paternal warmth rated by father and that rated by children using paired sample t-test, no differences were observed. This suggests that paternal warmth perceived by father and that perceived by the child were very similar to each other. Similarly, no differences were observed for maternal warmth and overall familiar warmth between parent rating and child rating. Moreover, paternal, maternal, and overall familial warmth rated by the parent and the child were significantly correlated, with correlation coefficient $r = 0.36$, $r = 0.31$, and $r = 0.38$ for paternal, maternal, and familial, respectively. In addition, when warmth levels are categorized into high versus low group with median split, the parent's perception and the child's perception of parental warmth are regarded as consistent, if the warmth levels rated by two parties were both high or both low; whereas inconsistent perception refers to the warmth level rated by one party to be high but by the other party to be low. The percentage of consistent perception for parental, maternal, and overall familial warmth were 65.50%, 64.60%, and 65.10%, respectively, suggesting that perception of parental warmth by most parent and child were consistent.

Dysfunctional Parenting Practice

2.75 Parenting practice was indicated by dysfunctional parenting, consisting of laxness (i.e., not much discipline on the child) and over-reactivity (i.e., too much emotions and actions toward the child). Figures 19 to 21 show the paternal, maternal, and overall family dysfunctional parenting practice. Fathers showed less dysfunctional parenting practice than mothers ($t(1381) = -4.32, p < .001$).

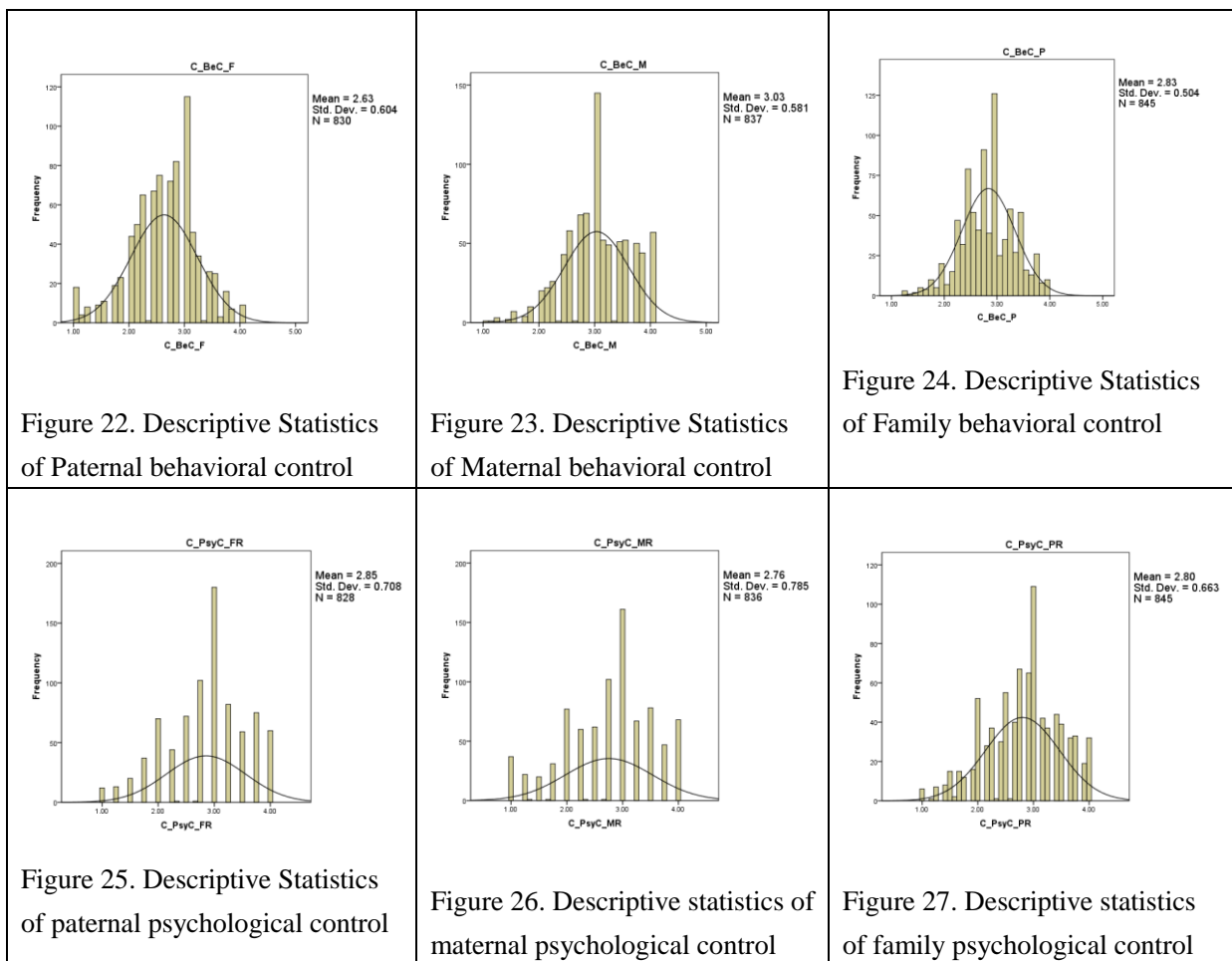


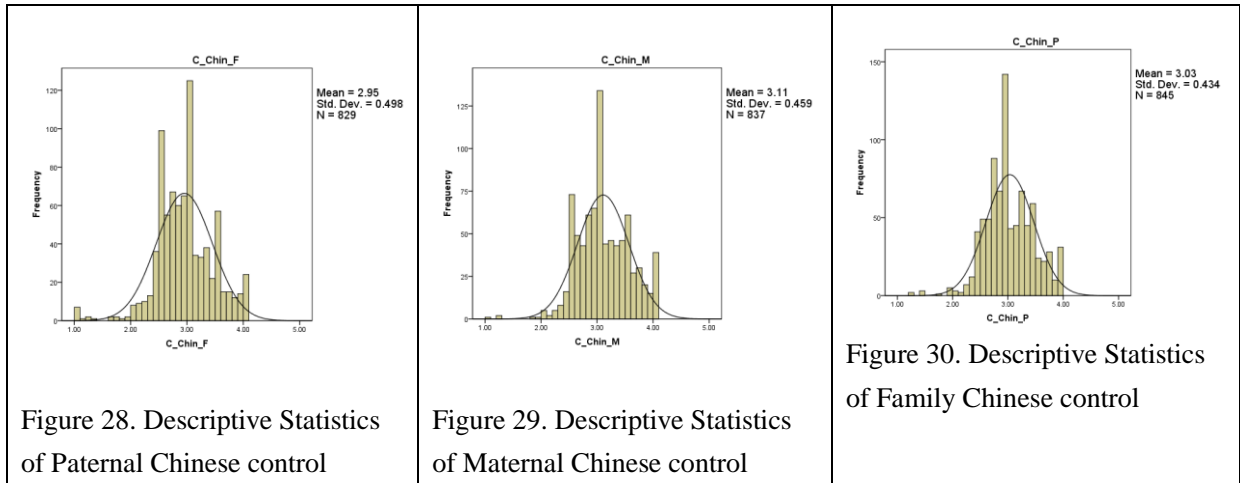
2.76 According to the study done by Family Health Service, Department of Health (2004) with an effective sample size of around 900, the mean scores for family dysfunctional parenting practice of parents with 4-year-old children was 3.57, without further differentiation between fathers and mothers. The mean scores of paternal, maternal and overall familial

dysfunctional parenting were 3.57, 3.64, and 3.61, respectively. Those results suggest it is possible that dysfunctional parenting in Hong Kong is very similar to that of ten years ago.

Parenting Practice Variables Rated by Children

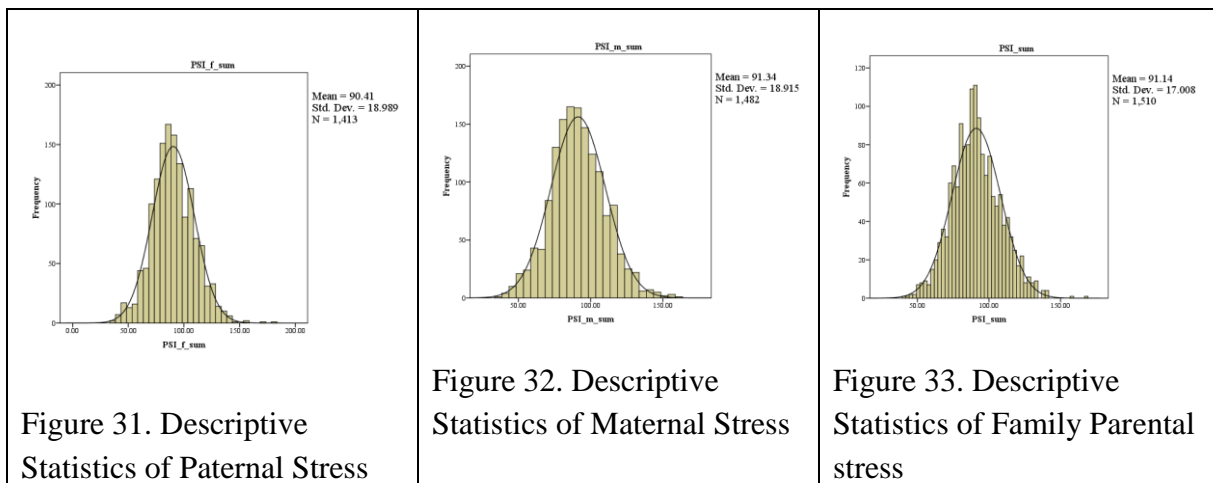
2.77 Parenting practice was indicated by parental behavioral control, psychological control and Chinese control (please refer to para 2.11 of the report). The Family behavioral control was calculated by averaging paternal and maternal behavioral control. The same applied to family psychological control and family Chinese control. Figures 22 to 24 show frequency distribution and mean and standard deviation of paternal, maternal and family behavioral control. Figures 25 to 27 show the frequency distribution and mean and standard deviation of paternal, maternal, and family psychological control. Figures 28 to 30 show frequency distribution and mean and standard deviation of paternal, maternal and family Chinese control. Children perceived higher behavioral control ($t(821) = 18.22, p < .001$), psychological control ($t(820) = 10.90, p < .001$), and Chinese control ($t(818) = 3.89, p < .001$) from mothers than from fathers.





Parental Stress

2.78 Figures 31~33 show paternal, maternal, and overall family parental stress. Fathers and mothers showed no difference in parental stress.

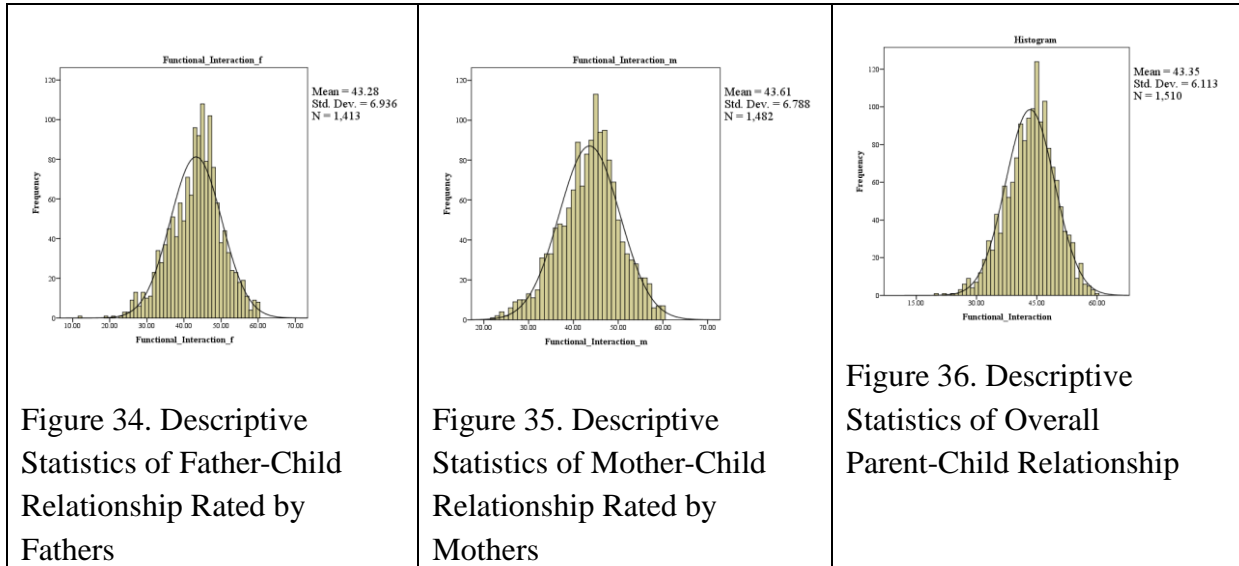


2.79 A study conducted by Lam (1999) with a sample size of 475 has shown that the mean score of parental stress was 100.76. In this survey, the mean scores of paternal, maternal, and overall parental stress were 90.41, 91.34, and 91.14, respectively. Comparing the figures between this survey and the previous study, it is possible that stress levels of parents in Hong Kong have reduced during the past fifteen years.

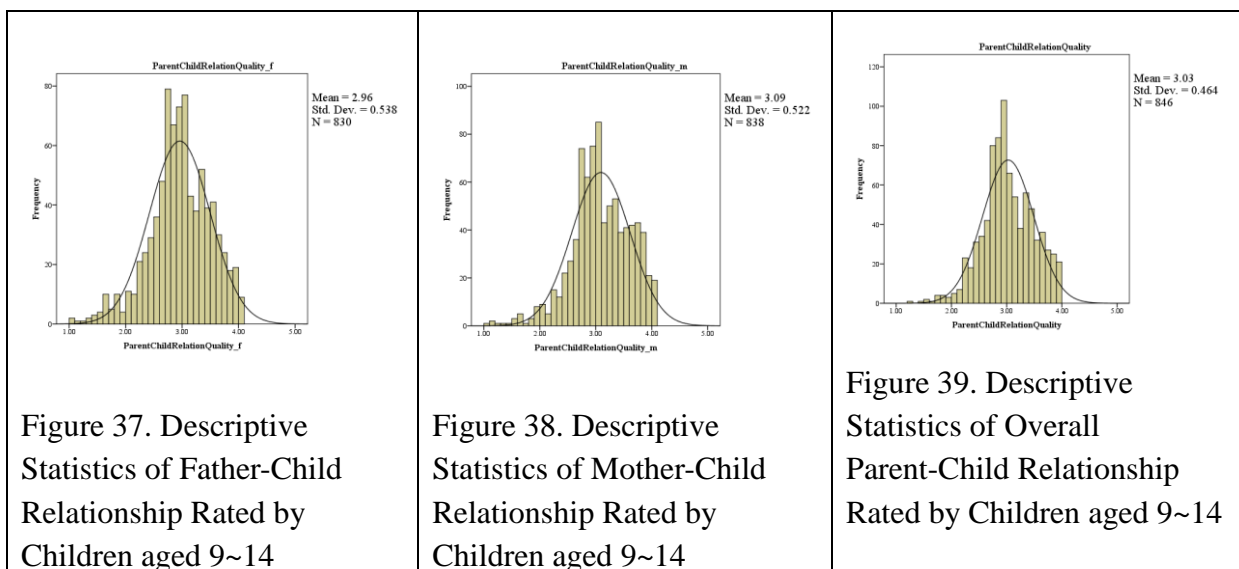
Descriptive Statistics of Parent-Child Relationship

2.80 Parent-child relationship was represented by functional interaction between parent and child. Higher scores indicate better parent-child interaction and relationship. Figure 34~36 shows frequency distribution and mean and standard deviation of father-child, mother-child, and overall parent-child relationship. Mother-child relationships rated by mothers were better than father-child relationships rated by fathers ($t(1384) = 2.68, p < .01$). According to the study done by Family Health Service, Department of Health (2004) with an

effective sample size of about 900 for parents of 4-year-old children, the mean score for parent-child relationship was 44.76, and in this survey the corresponding score is 43.35. These results suggest it is possible that parent-child relationship perceived by parents is the same as that of ten years ago.

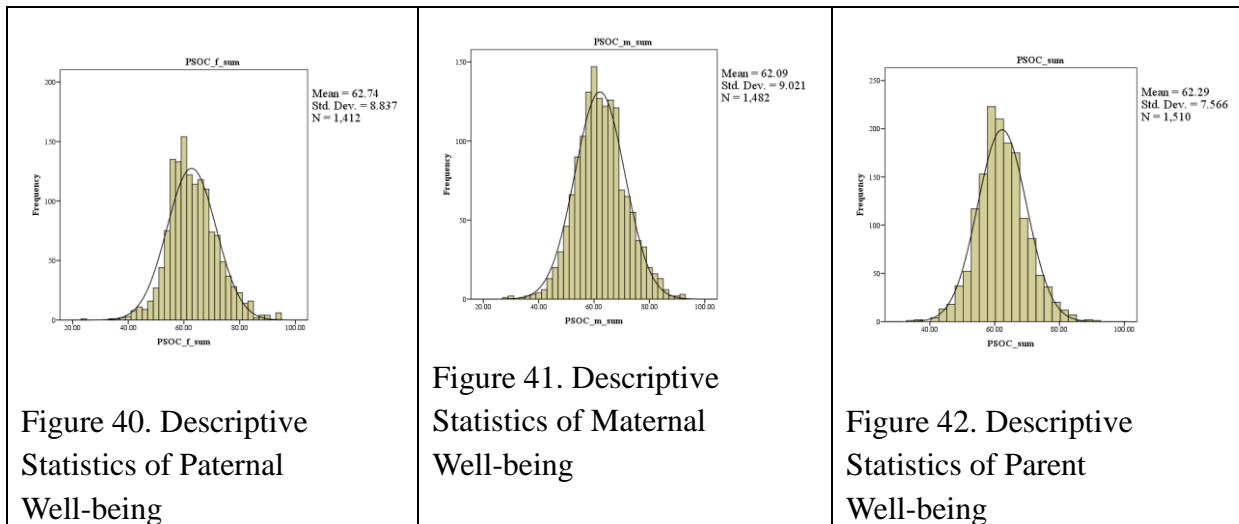


2.81 Children aged 9~14 also rated their perceived parent-child relationship with the father and the mother. Figures 37~39 show frequency distribution, and mean and standard deviation of paternal, maternal, and the overall parent-child relationship perceived by children. No difference was observed between paternal-child and maternal-child relationship perceived by children. The mother-child relationships were better than the father-child relationships rated by the child ($t(821) = 7.40, p < .001$).

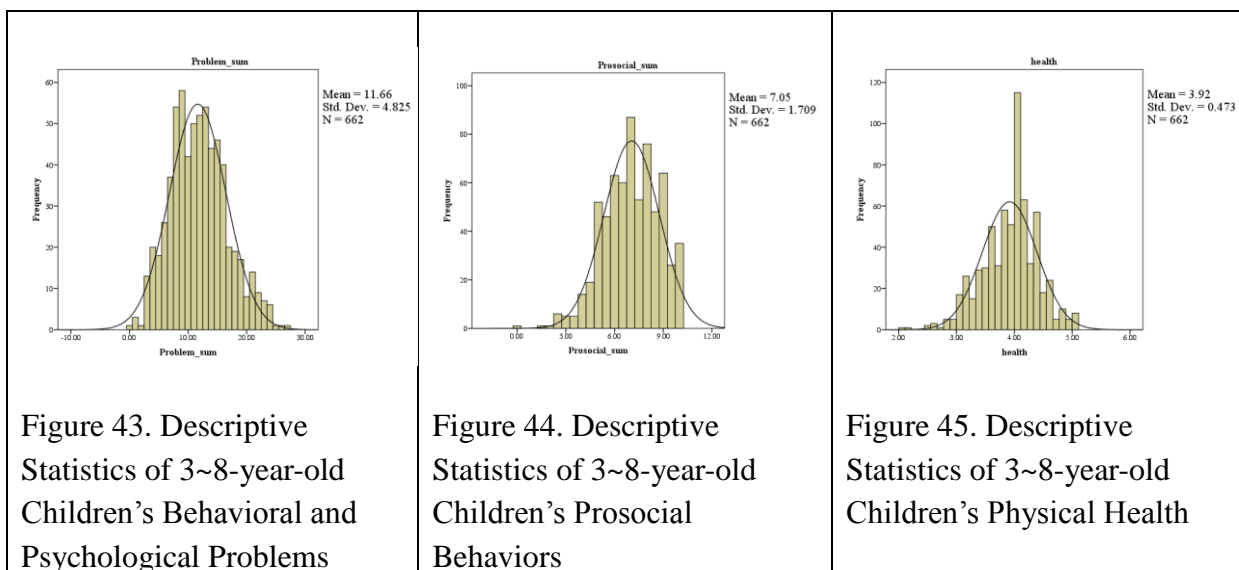


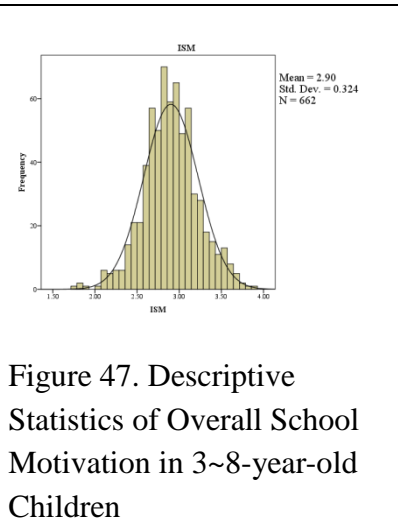
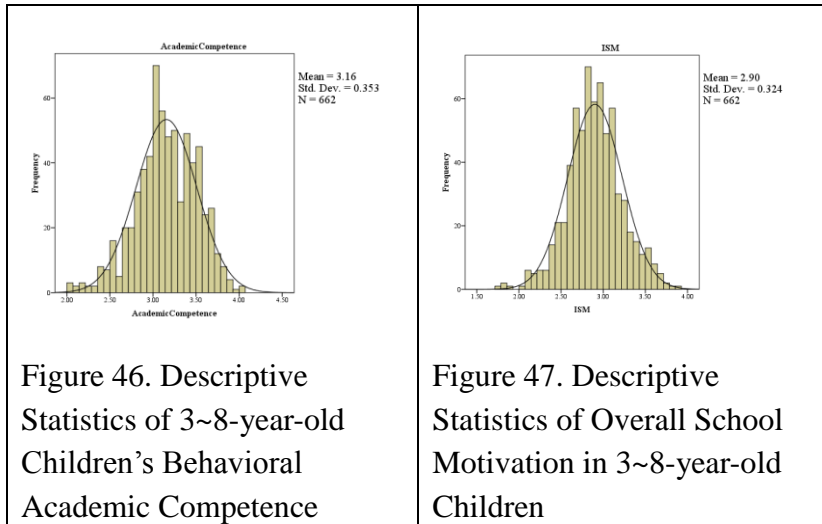
Descriptive Statistics of Parent Well-being and Child Outcomes

2.82 The well-being of parents was indicated by the parents' sense of competence, which is parents' feeling of being satisfied and qualified with the parental role. Parent sense of competence is a positive psychological state of parents leading to happiness. In addition, parental competence highly correlates with parental self-efficacy which was a major contribution to subjective well-beings of parents (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Silver et al., 2006). Figures 40~42 show paternal, maternal, and overall parent well-being. No difference was observed between paternal and maternal well-being.

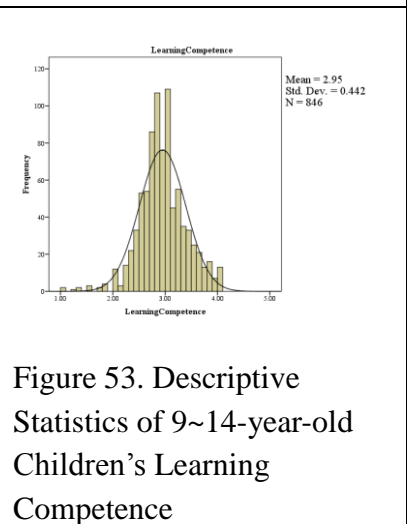
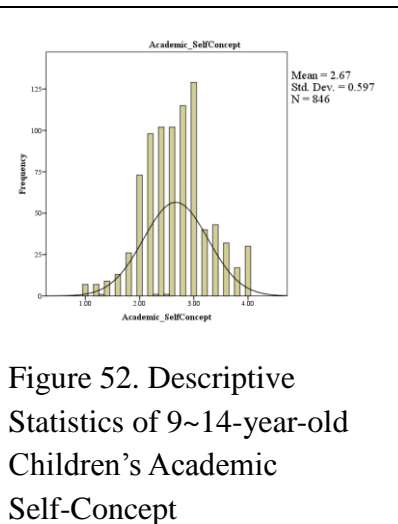
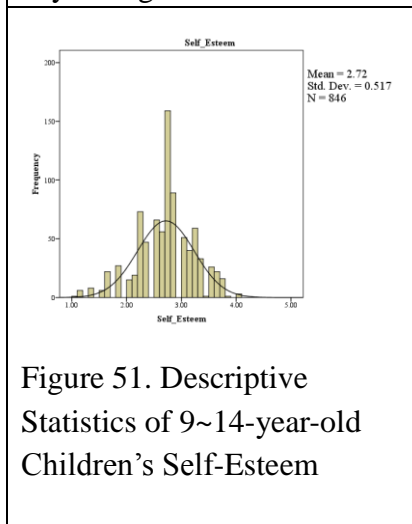
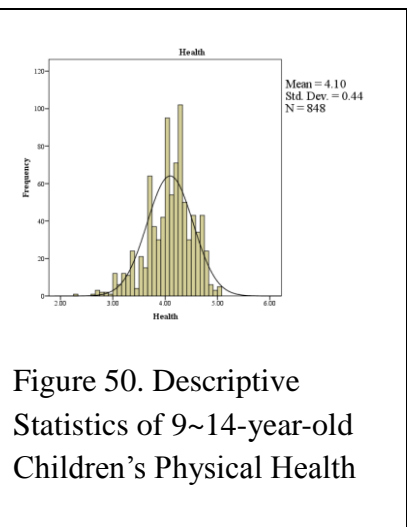
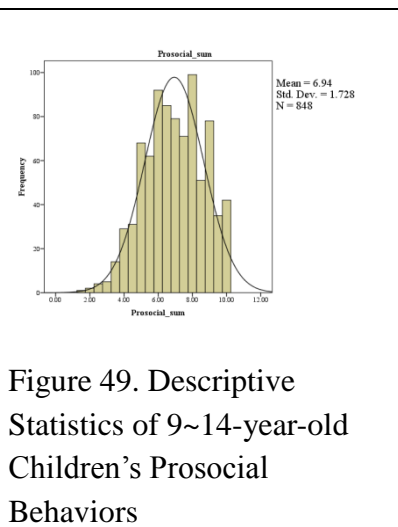
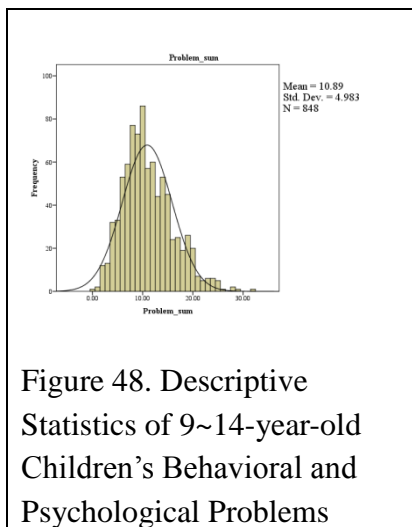


2.83 Developmental outcomes of children aged 3 to 8 include problem scores and prosocial scores from the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Figure 43 and 44). Figure 45 shows physical health. Figure 46~47 showed academic success including behavioral academic competence and school motivation.





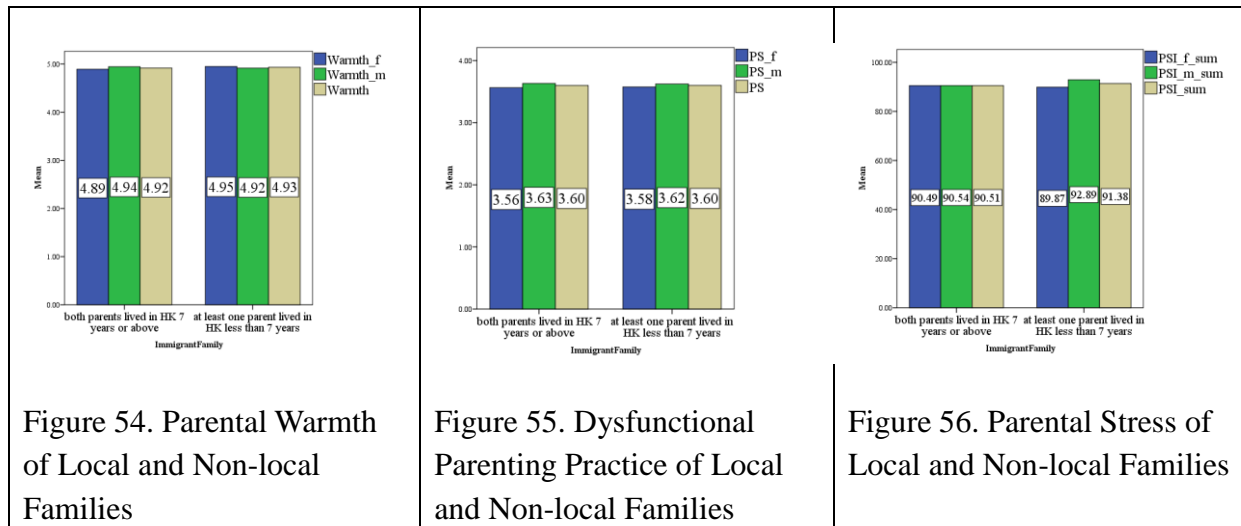
2.84 Developmental outcomes of children aged 9 to 14 include problem scores and prosocial scores from SDQ (Figure 48 and 49). Figures 50 and 51 show physical health and self-esteem, respectively. Figures 52 and 53 show academic success including academic self-concept and learning competence.



Demographics Affect Parenting, Parent-Child Relationship, and Child Outcomes

Demographics Affect Parenting

2.85 Whether a family was an immigrant or not did not affect parental warmth, dysfunctional parenting practice, and parental stress (Figure 54~56), except that mothers of an immigrant family have higher parental stress than mothers of a local family ($t(1430) = 2.07, p < .05$).



2.86 Whether a family was a first-marriage family or not affected most parenting variables (Figure 57~59). Mothers of first-marriage families showed higher maternal warmth than those of non-first marriage families ($t(1441) = 2.22, p < .05$), and the overall family parental warmth of first marriage families was higher than that of non-first marriage families ($t(1467) = 2.42, p < .05$). Paternal, maternal, and overall family dysfunctional parenting practice of non-first marriage families were higher than those of first marriage families ($t(1386) = 2.46, p < .05, t(1441) = 2.64, p < .05, and t(1467) = 3.74, p < .001$ for paternal, maternal, and overall family dysfunctional parenting respectively). Compared to mothers of first marriage families, mothers from non-first marriage families showed higher maternal stress ($t(1443) = 2.88, p < .01$). Similarly, overall parental stress in non-first marriage families were higher than that of first-marriage families ($t(1467) = 2.88, p < .01$).

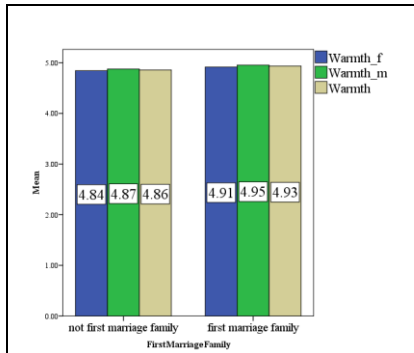


Figure 57. Parental Warmth of First Marriage and Non-First Marriage Families

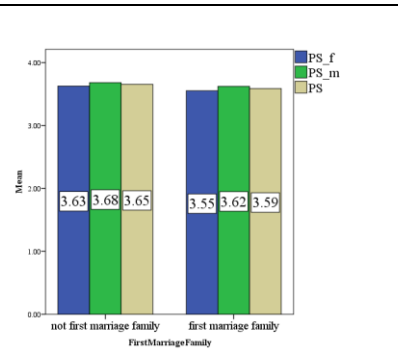


Figure 58. Dysfunctional Parenting Practice of First Marriage and Non-First Marriage Families

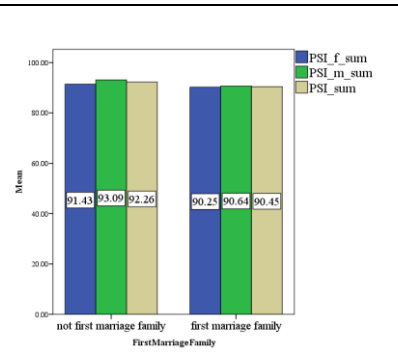


Figure 59. Parental Stress of First Marriage and Non-First Marriage Families

2.87 Whether a family was a single-parent or bi-parent family also affected most parenting variables (Figure 60~62). Single mothers showed lower maternal warmth than did mothers of both parents families ($t(1478) = -2.55, p < .05$), and overall family parental warmth of single parent families was lower than that of both parents families ($t(1508) = -2.40, p < .05$). Paternal, maternal, and the overall family dysfunctional parenting practice of single parent families were higher than those of both parents families ($t(1410) = 2.95, p < .01, t(1478) = 2.15, p < .05$, and $t(1508) = 4.37, p < .001$ for paternal, maternal, and the overall family dysfunctional parenting respectively). Maternal stress and the overall parental stress of single parent families were higher than those of both parents families ($t(1480) = 3.17, p < .01$). Similarly, the overall parental stress in non-first marriage families was higher than that from first-marriage families ($t(1508) = 3.31, p < .01$).

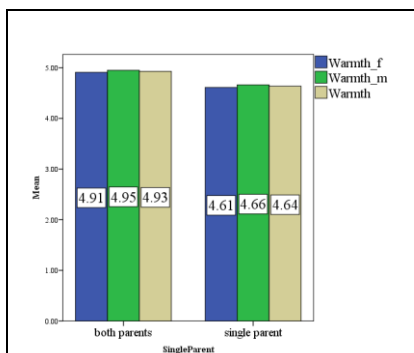


Figure 60. Parental Warmth of Single Parent and Non-Single Parent Families

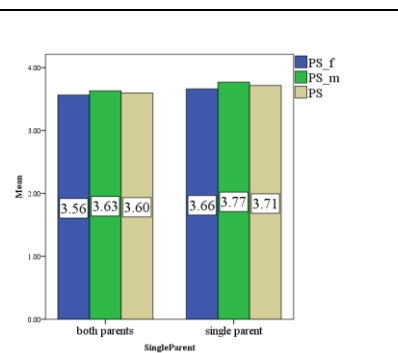


Figure 61. Dysfunctional Parenting Practice of Single Parent and Non-Single Parent Families

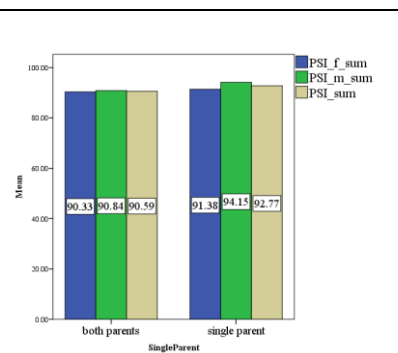


Figure 62. Parental Stress of Single Parent and Non-Single Parent Families

2.88 The Socioeconomic Status (SES) affected all parenting variables (Figure 63~65). Compared to low SES families, high SES families showed higher parenting warmth for

fathers ($t(858) = 4.02, p < .001$), mothers ($t(908) = 5.77, p < .001$), and the overall family parenting warmth ($t(910) = 5.75, p < .001$). Paternal, maternal, and overall family dysfunctional parenting of high SES families were lower than those of low SES families ($t(860) = -5.62, p < .001, t(908) = -6.95, p < .001, and t(910) = -7.56, p < .001$ for paternal, maternal, and the overall family respectively). Fathers of high SES families showed lower paternal stress than fathers of low SES families ($t(861) = -4.90, p < .001$), and similar results were shown for mothers ($t(910) = -5.90, p < .001$) and overall parenting stress ($t(910) = -6.19, p < .001$).

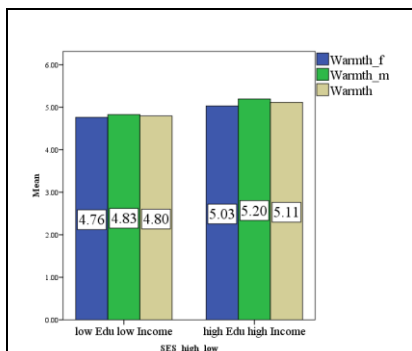


Figure 63. Parental Warmth of High SES and Low SES Families

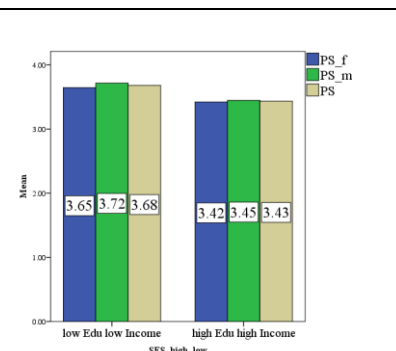


Figure 64. Dysfunctional Parenting Practice of High SES and Low SES Families

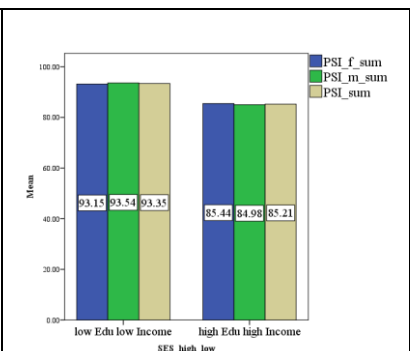
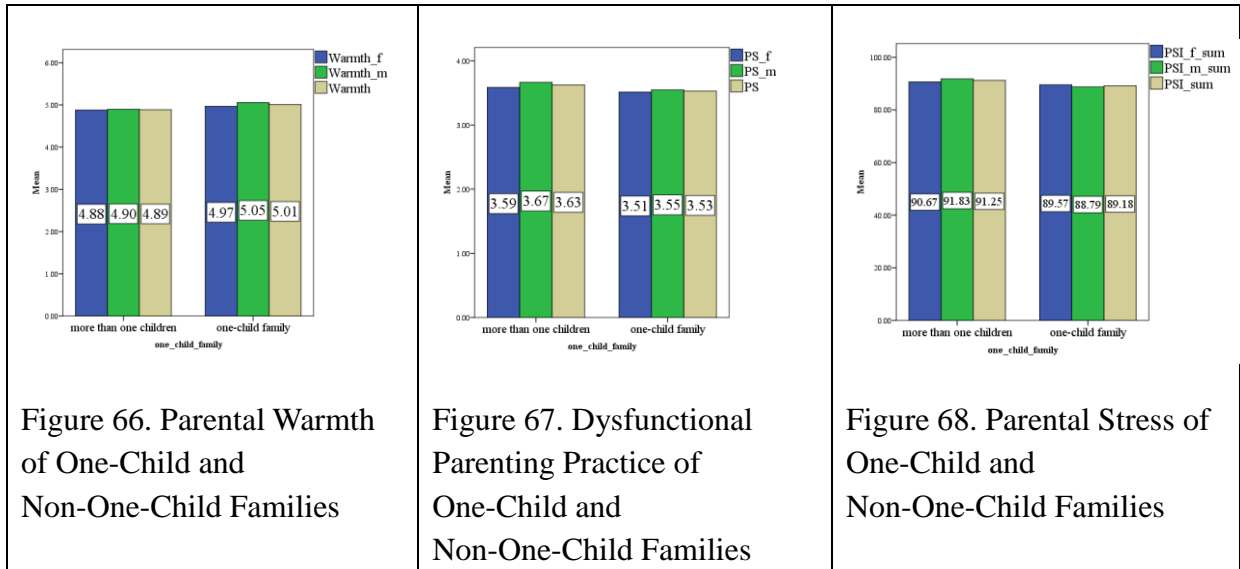


Figure 65. Parental Stress of High SES and Low SES Families

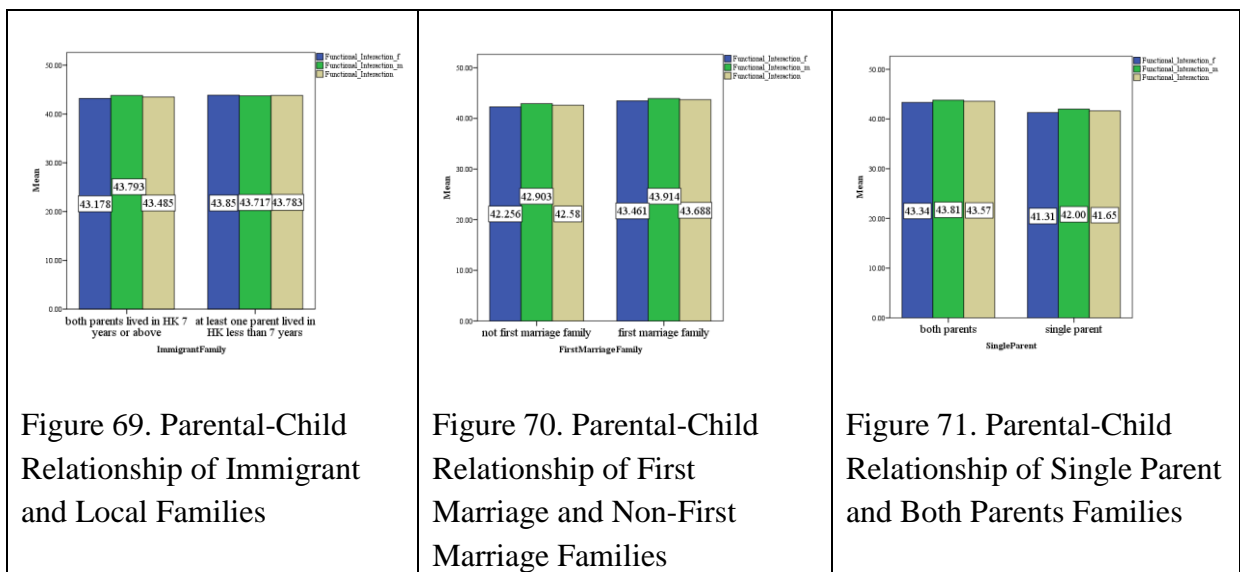
2.89 Whether a family had one child or more affected most parenting variables (Figure 66~68). Mothers of one-child families showed higher maternal warmth ($t(1473) = 3.54, p < .001$) than those of families with more than a child. Overall parental warmth of one-child families was also higher than that of multiple children families ($t(1503) = 3.07, p < .01$). Paternal, maternal, and overall family dysfunctional parenting of one-child families were lower than those of multiple children families ($t(1405) = -2.13, p < .05, t(1473) = -3.78, p < .001, and t(1503) = -3.11, p < .01$ for paternal, maternal, and the overall family respectively). Mothers of one-child families showed lower maternal stress than mothers of multiple children families ($t(1475) = -2.22, p < .05$).

2.90 Regarding relationship between number of children and parenting, correlational analysis showed that the larger number of children a family had, the family showed the lower maternal warmth ($r = -.07, p < .01$) and overall parental warmth ($r = -.06, p < .05$), the higher paternal ($r = .06, p < .05$), maternal ($r = .08, p < .01$), and overall family dysfunctional parenting practice ($r = .07, p < .01$), and the higher maternal stress ($r = .10, p < .001$) and family stress ($r = .08, p < .01$).



Demographics Affect Parent-Child Relationship

2.91 Parent-child Relationship was affected by most demographic variables (Figure 69~73). Specifically, parent-child relationship was higher in first marriage families than non-first marriage families ($t(1387) = 2.15, p < .05$, $t(1443) = 3.47, p < .01$, and $t(1467) = 3.85, p < .001$ for father-child, mother-child, and parent-child relationships, respectively). Mother-child relationship ($t(1480) = 4.08, p < .001$) and parent-child relationship ($t(1508) = 4.55, p < .001$) were higher in both-parent families than single parent families. Father-child ($t(861) = 7.41, p < .001$), mother-child ($t(910) = 9.16, p < .001$), and parent-child relationship ($t(910) = 9.45, p < .001$) were higher in high SES than low SES families. Mother-child relationship was higher ($t(1475) = 2.86, p < .01$) and parent-child relationship was marginally higher ($t(1503) = 1.87, p = .06$) in one-child families than multiple children families.



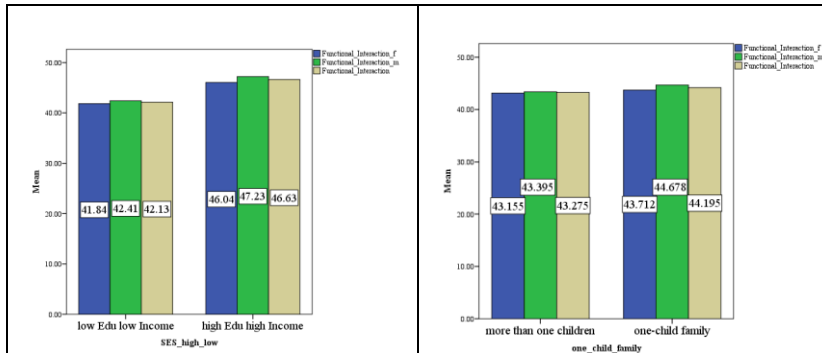


Figure 72. Parental-Child Relationship of High SES and Low SES Families

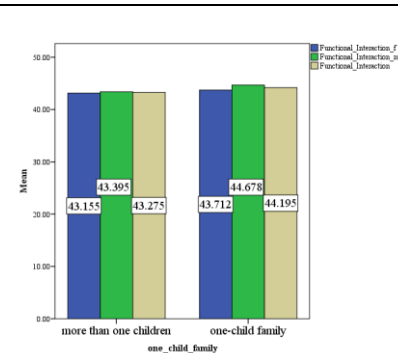


Figure 73. Parental-Child Relationship of One-Child and Non-One-Child Families

Demographics Affect Child Outcomes

2.92 For children aged 3~8, demographic variables did not affect the children’s developmental outcomes, except SES (Figure 74~78). Children aged 3~8 from immigrant families had better health than those from non-immigrant families ($t(633) = 2.13, p < .05$). Compared to children from low SES families, children from high SES families showed less behavioral and psychological problems ($t(393) = 3.34, p < .01$), higher academic competence ($t(393) = 2.40, p < .05$), and higher school motivation ($t(393) = 4.10, p < .001$).

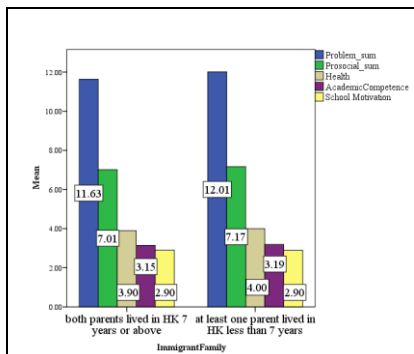


Figure 74. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 3~8 in Immigrant and Local Families

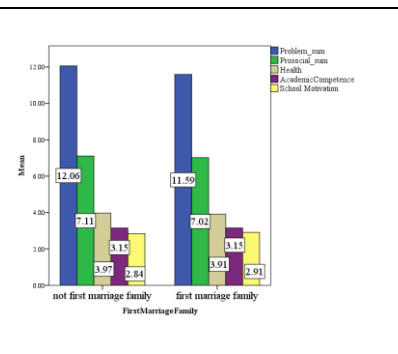


Figure 75. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 3~8 in First Marriage and Non-First Marriage Families

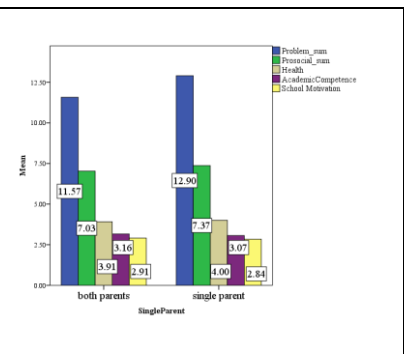


Figure 76. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 3~8 in Single Parent and Both Parents Families

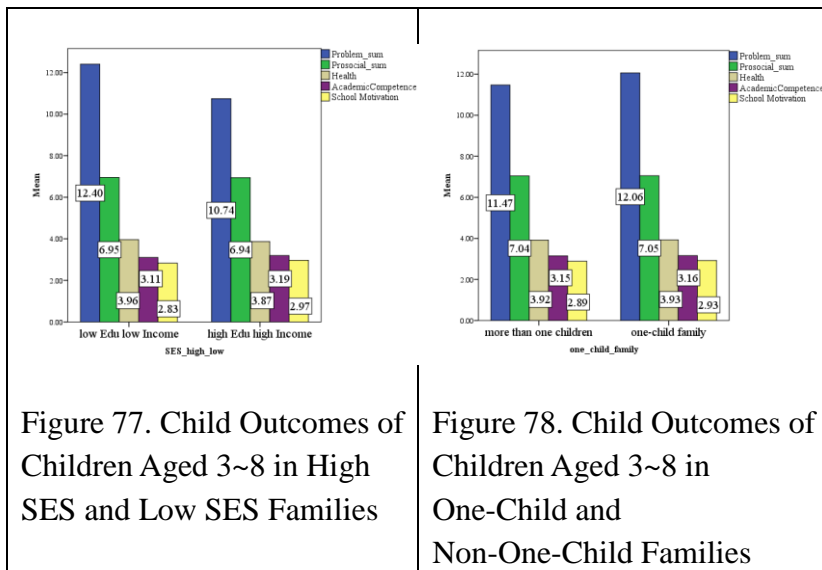


Figure 77. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 3~8 in High SES and Low SES Families

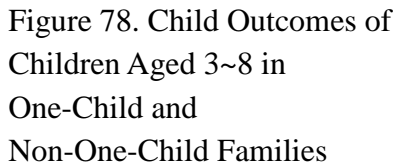


Figure 78. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 3~8 in One-Child and Non-One-Child Families

2.93 For children aged 9~14, demographic variables did not affect the children’s developmental outcomes, except immigration and SES (Figure 79~83). More specifically, children from immigrant families had better physical health ($t(822) = 2.66, p < .01$) and higher academic self-concept ($t(820) = 2.72, p < .01$) than those from local families. A possible reason is that immigrant parents are more conscious of and concerned about the health status and academic achievement of their children.

2.94 Compared to 9~14-year-old children from low SES families, children aged 9~14 from high SES families showed less behavioral and psychological problems ($t(515) = 2.24, p < .05$), marginally more prosocial behaviors ($t(515) = 1.75, p = .08$), marginally higher self-esteem ($t(514) = 1.78, p = .08$), better academic self-concept ($t(514) = 2.37, p < .05$), and higher learning competence ($t(514) = 2.08, p < .05$).

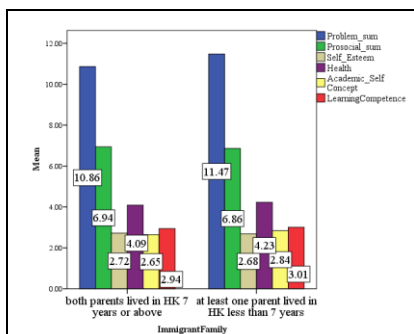


Figure 79. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 9~14 in Immigrant and Local Families

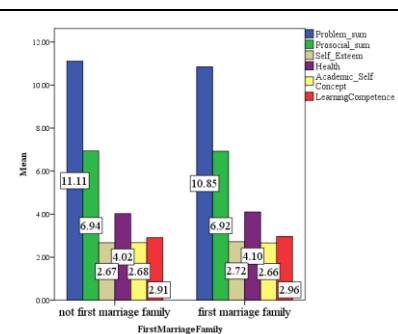


Figure 80. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 9~14 in First Marriage and Non-First Marriage Families

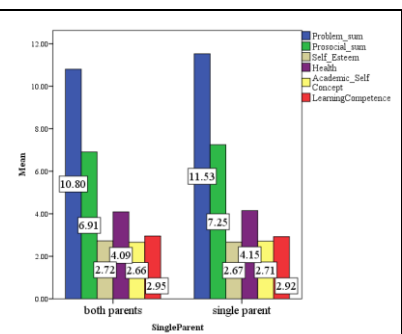
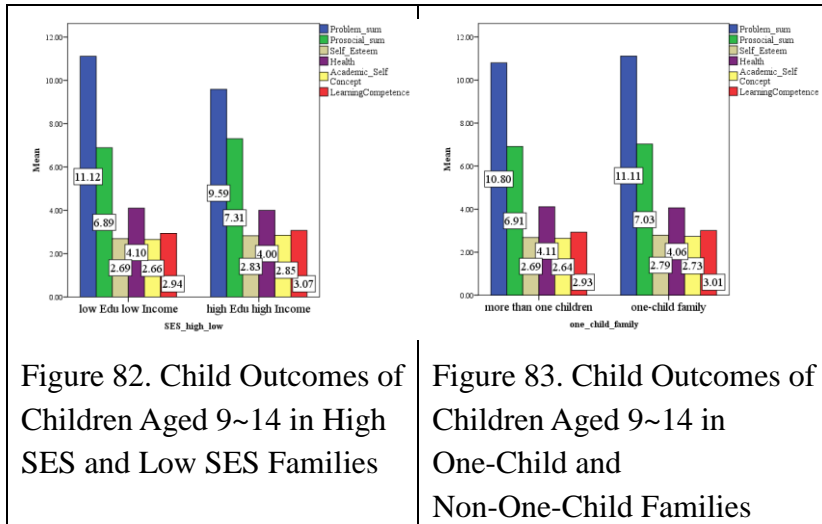
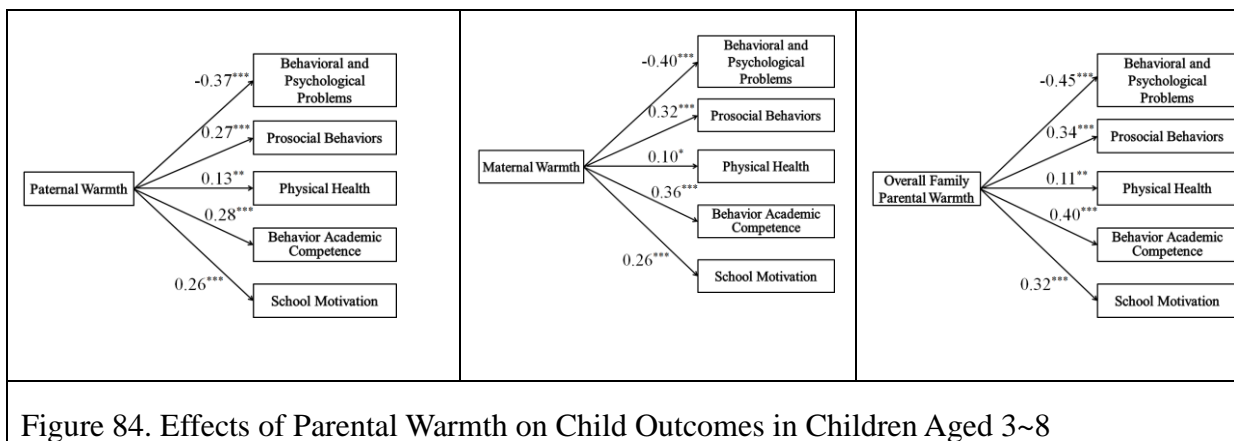


Figure 81. Child Outcomes of Children Aged 9~14 in Single Parent and Both Parents Families



Associations between Parenting, Parent-Child Relationship and Child Outcomes

2.95 The effects of parental warmth, dysfunctional parenting practice, and parental stress on child outcomes were analyzed with simple regressions², which are essentially correlations. For 3~8-year-old children (Figure 84~87), higher paternal, maternal, and overall family parental warmth were associated with less behavioral and psychological problems, more prosocial behaviors, better physical health, higher behavior academic competence, and higher school motivation. Similarly, better parent-child relationship was associated with better child outcomes. More dysfunctional parenting practice and higher levels of parental stress were associated with more behavioral and psychological problems, less prosocial behaviors, worse physical health, lower behavior academic competence, and lower school motivation.



² The regressions were conducted with only one predictor and one outcome variables. In the figures, multiple outcome variables were presented together merely for convenience reading. A positive (negative) value indicates a positive (negative) association between the predictor and the outcome variable, which is, the higher the predictor, the higher (lower) the outcome variable was.

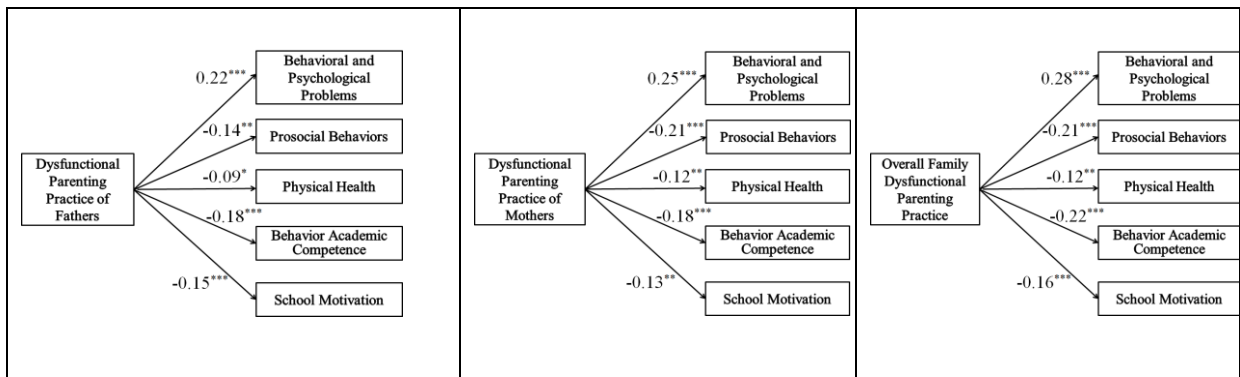


Figure 85. Effects of Dysfunctional Parenting Practice on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 3~8

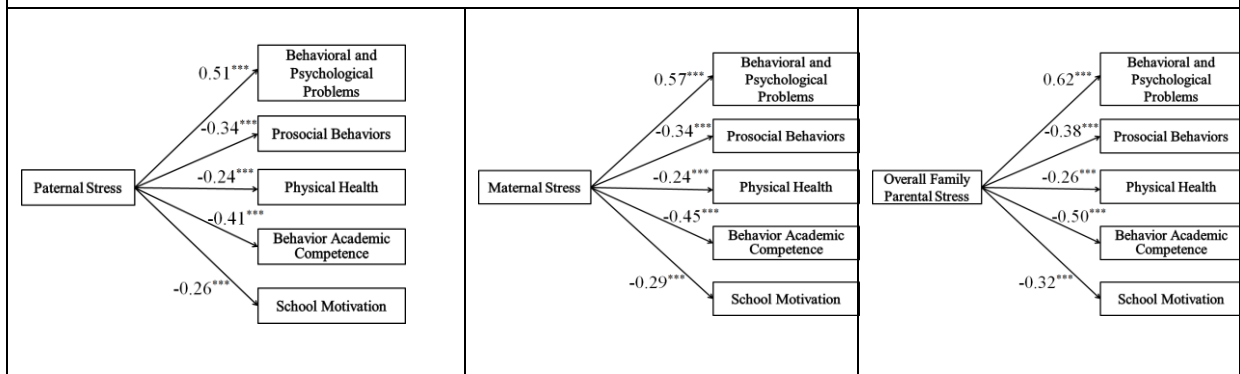


Figure 86. Effects of Parental Stress on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 3~8

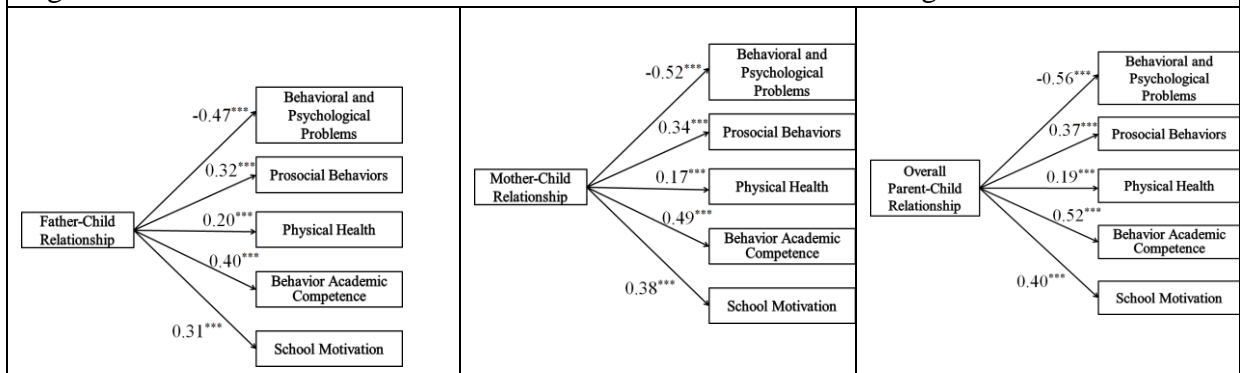


Figure 87. Effects of Parent-Child Relationship on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 3~8

Note. † and * indicate significant levels of regression analysis. † indicates $p < .10$, * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

2.96 For 9~14-year-old children (Figure 88~91), the effects of parenting variables on child outcomes were similar to those for children aged 3~8. Higher parental warmth and better parent-child relationship were associated with better child outcomes, whereas more dysfunctional parenting practice and higher parental stress were associated with worse child outcomes.

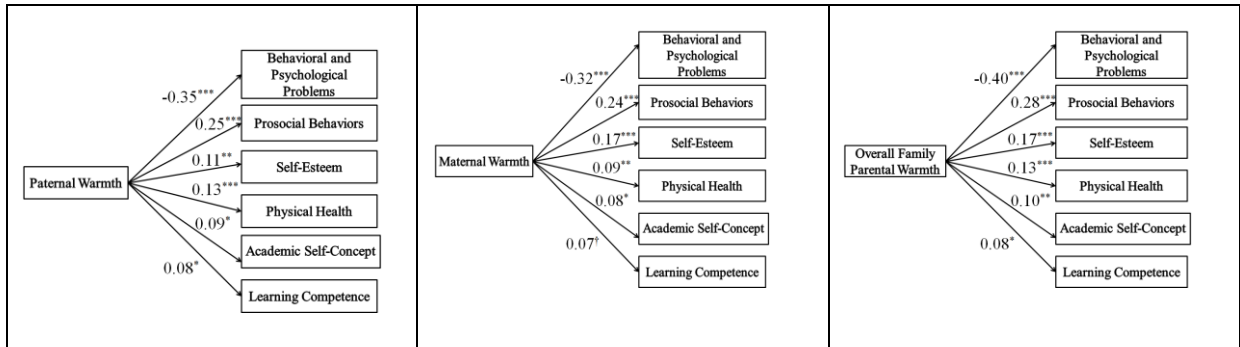


Figure 88. Effects of Parental Warmth on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9~14

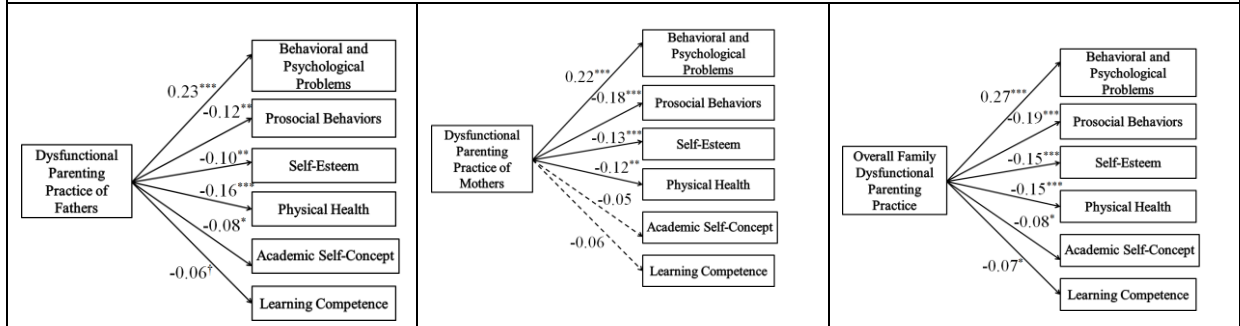


Figure 89. Effects of Dysfunctional Parenting Practice on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9~14

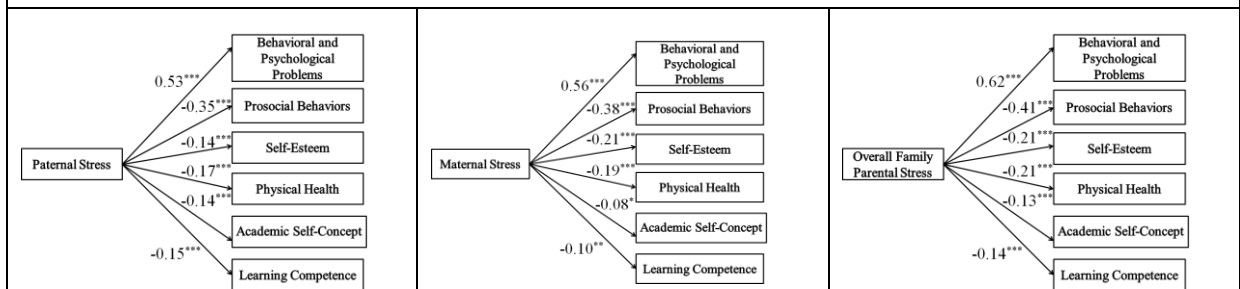


Figure 90. Effects of Parental Stress on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9~14

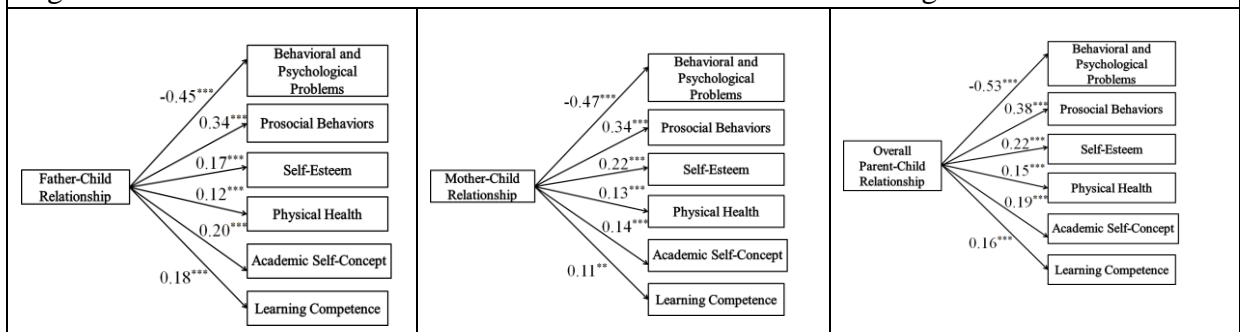


Figure 91. Effects of Parent-Child Relationship on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9~14

Note. † and * indicate significant levels of regression analysis. † indicates $p < .10$, * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

Associations between Parenting, Parent-Child Relationship Rated by 9~14-year-old Children and Child Outcome

2.97 The effects of behavioral control, psychological control and Chinese control on child outcomes were analyzed using regressions. Figure 92 shows that higher family behavioral control was associated with less behavioral and psychological problems, prosocial behaviors, higher self-esteem, better physical health, higher academic self-concepts, and more learning competence. Figure 93 shows that higher family psychological control is associated with worse child outcomes except for physical health, academic self-concepts, and learning competence. Figure 94 shows that higher family Chinese control was associated with better child outcomes excluding self-esteem.

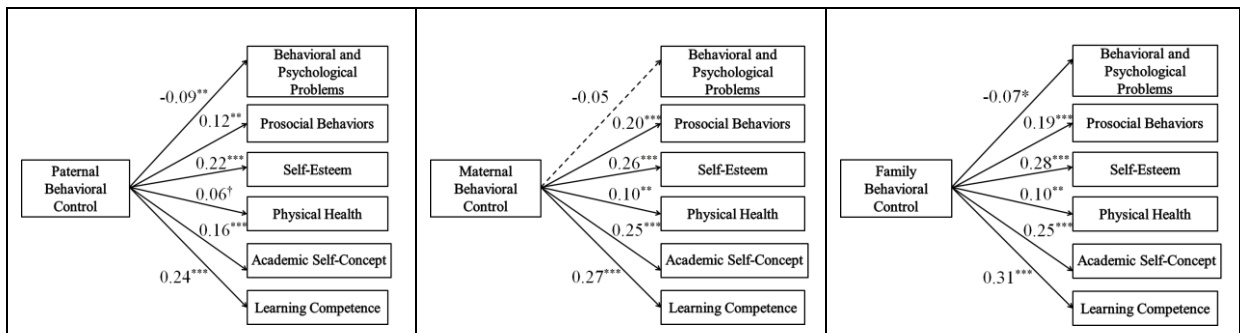


Figure 92. Effects of Parental behavioral control on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9-14

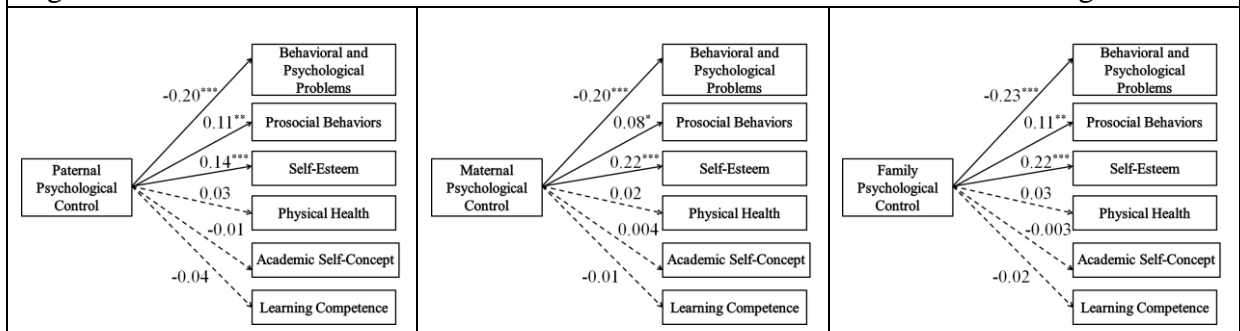


Figure 93. Effects of Parental psychological control on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9-14

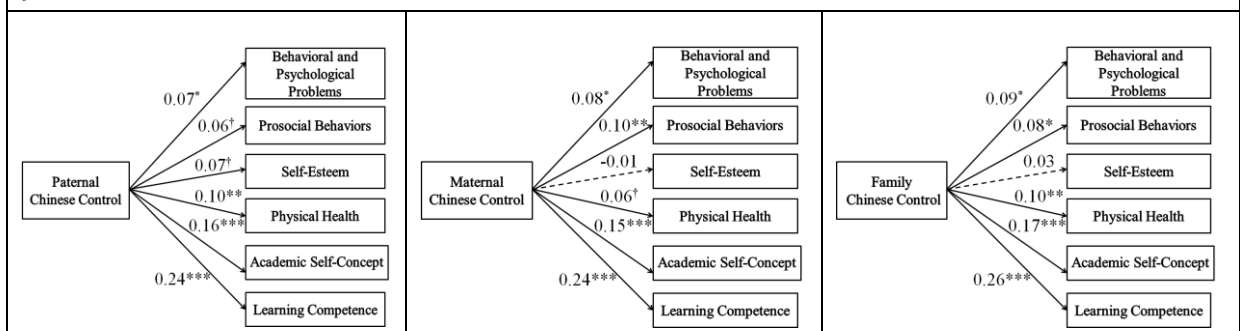


Figure 94. Effects of Parental Chinese control on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9-14

Note. † and * indicate significant levels of regression analysis. † indicates $p < .10$, * indicates

$p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

2.98 Figure 95 shows that better child perceived parent-child relationship were associated with better child outcomes. These results suggest that the parent-child relationship rated by parents and that rated by the child aged 9~14 had similar associations with various child outcomes.

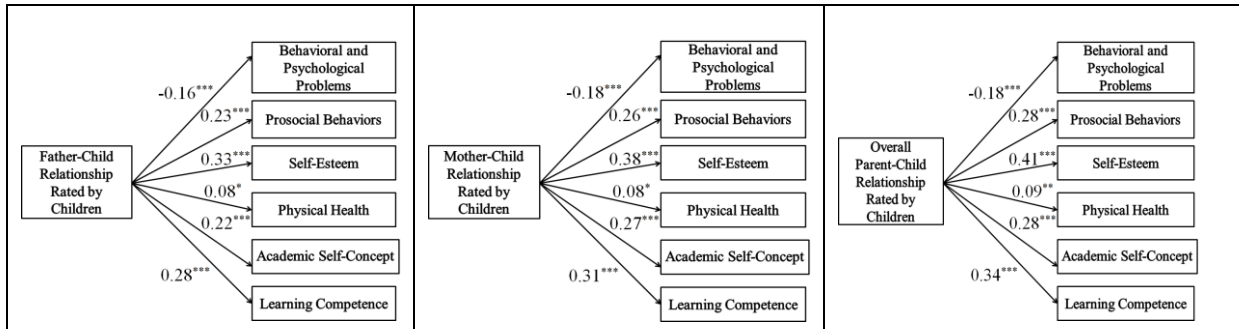


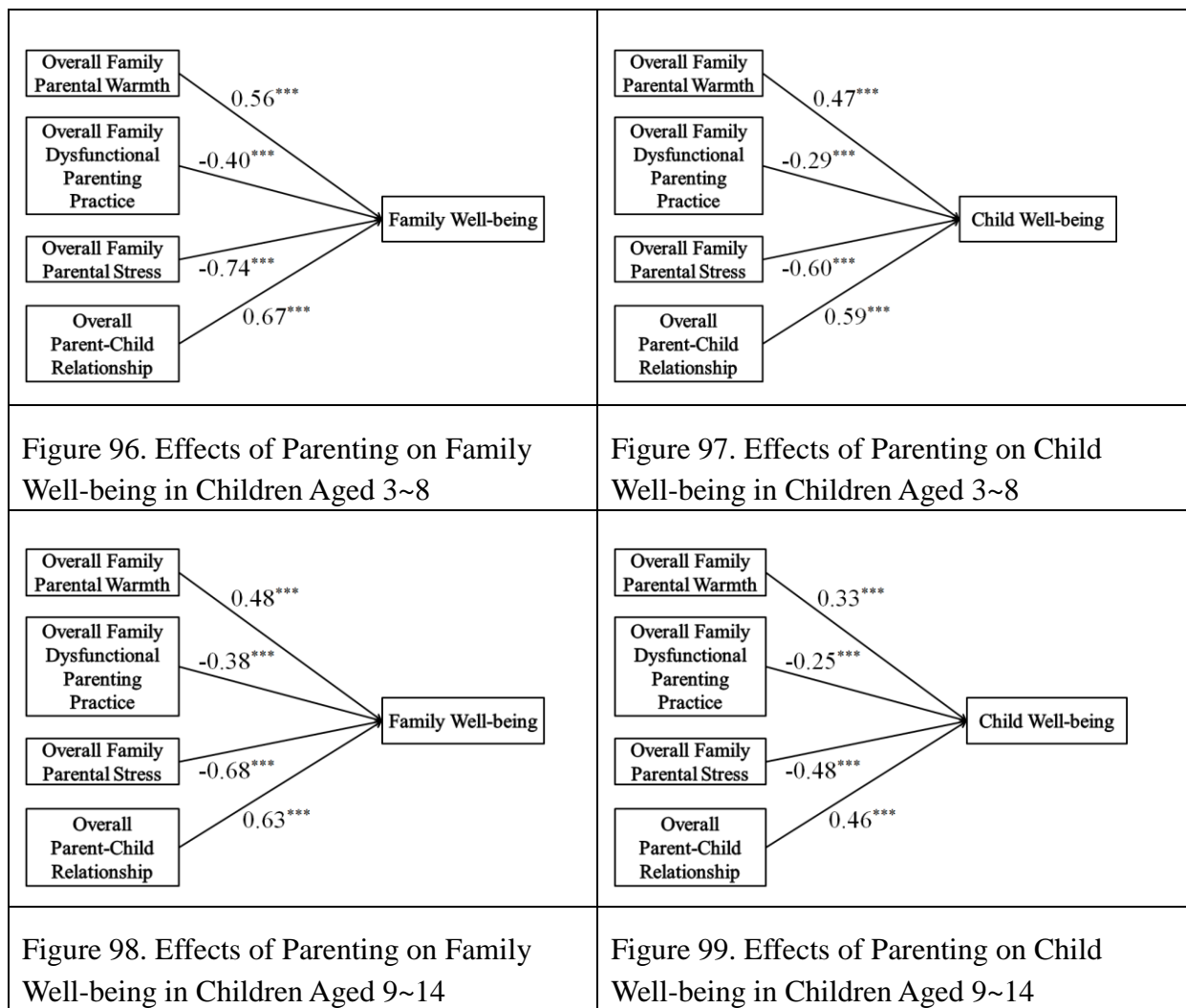
Figure 95. Effects of Child Perceived Parent-Child Relationship on Child Outcomes in Children Aged 9-14

Note. † and * indicate significant levels of regression analyses. † indicates $p < .10$, * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

Associations between Parenting and Family Well-being and Child Well-being

2.99 Since family well-being can be conceptualized as the sum of well-being of individuals in the family (Behnke & MacDermid, 2004), paternal well-being, maternal well-being, and child well-being were averaged to represent family well-being. Parent well-being is indicated with the parents' happiness based on their sense of competence in being parents. Child well-being is specified with an aggregated score of psychological success, physical health, and academic successes for 3~8-year-old children. For 9~14-year-old children, it is specified with the three components plus self-esteem. Psychological success refers to lower behavioral and psychological problems and more prosocial behaviors. Thus, reversed problem scores of SDQ were adopted. Higher reversed problem scores represented lower behavioral and psychological problems, thus, the higher the psychological success. As score ranges of different instruments were not the same, all scores were standardized into the same scale so that they can be aggregated.

2.100 For 3~8-year-old children, higher paternal warmth, and higher parent-child relationship were associated with better family well-being and child well-being, whereas more dysfunctional parenting practice and higher parental stress were associated with lower levels of family and child well-being (Figure 96 and 97). Similar results were shown for 9~14-year-old children (Figure 98 and 99).



Note. * indicate significant levels of regression analyses. *** indicates $p < .001$.

The Effects of Demographics on Child Outcomes were mediated by Parenting Variables

2.101 Among all demographic variables, only the SES affected the child well-being outcomes. Thus, mediation analysis³ was used to examine whether the effects of SES on family and child well-being can be explained by parenting. Figures 100~107 show that for 3~8-year-old children, the effect of SES on family well-being and child well-being were completely mediated by parental warmth, dysfunctional parenting, parental stress, and parent-child relationship. These results suggest that for children aged 3~8, parenting is crucial in improving family well-being and child well-being. If parents of a low SES family could

³ Mediation analysis is a statistic to explore the mechanism or process underlying an observed relationship between two variables A and B. If the relationship disappears after a mediator (in this study, a parenting variable) is considered in the relational model, then the mediator is supposed to explain the effect from A to B. That is, A does not directly effects on B but effects via the mediator. The observed relationship between A and B is due to the effect from A to the mediator which in turn effects on B. In the figures, solid lines indicate significant association whereas dash lines indicate no association, and positive (negative) values indicate positive (negative) associations among variables.

show high parental warmth, low parental stress, and less dysfunctional parenting, well-being of the child in that family can be the same as that of a child in a high SES family.

<p>Figure 100. Parental Warmth Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>	<p>Figure 101. Parental Warmth Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>
<p>Figure 102. Dysfunctional Parenting Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>	<p>Figure 103. Dysfunctional Parenting Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>
<p>Figure 104. Parental Stress Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>	<p>Figure 105. Parental Stress Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>
<p>Figure 106. Parent-Child Relationship Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>	<p>Figure 107. Parent-Child Relationship Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 3~8</p>

Note. * indicate significant levels of mediation analyses. *** indicates $p < .001$.

2.102 The mediation analysis shows that parenting variables completely mediate between SES, and family and child well-being. Therefore, parenting could explain the total effects of SES on family and child well-being. These results were similar to those of 3~8-year-old children. For children aged 9~14, parenting is crucial in improving family and child

well-being, regardless of the effect of SES. Children aged 9~14 from low SES families can have high level of well-being if parenting is warm and functional.

<p>Figure 108. Parental Warmth Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>	<p>Figure 109. Parental Warmth Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>
<p>Figure 110. Dysfunctional Parenting Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>	<p>Figure 111. Dysfunctional Parenting Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>
<p>Figure 112. Parental Stress Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>	<p>Figure 113. Parental Stress Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>
<p>Figure 114. Parent-Child Relationship Mediates Between SES and Family Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>	<p>Figure 115. Parent-Child Relationship Mediates Between SES and Child Well-being in Children Aged 9~14</p>

Note. * indicate significant levels of mediation analyses. * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$, *** indicates $p < .001$.

Discussions

Summary of Descriptive Results

2.103 Demographic results reveal that 13.50% of the 1510 families in the territory-wide survey were immigrant families in which at least one parent has been living in Hong Kong less than seven years. The number of children in families varied from 1 to 5, and 30.90% families had only one child and 55.42% families were with 2 children. More than half fathers and mothers had secondary education, and 18.99% families had both parents with tertiary education. Around half families were with family income between 10,000HKD and 30,000HKD. High and low income families were coded according to the median family income by household size, and 65.15% families in the survey had income lower than the median. For Socioeconomic Status (SES), high SES families were indicated by both high family education and high family income; whereas low SES families were represented by families with both low education and low income. There were 16.37% high SES and 60.98% low SES families. About 82% families are with both parents in their first marriage. The number of single parent families is 138 or 9.14% of the families in the survey. Among those families, 105 families were with single-mothers. Although the current sample is a representative sample for the Hong Kong population in terms of age and district distribution, it is not a representative for Hong Kong population in terms of single parenthood and socioeconomic status. The current sample includes higher proportion of single parents and families from low socioeconomic status. Considerations of such sample characteristics should be included in the interpretation of findings in the survey.

2.104 Means of parental, maternal, and family parental warmth were 4.90, 4.93, and 4.91, respectively in this survey, and the corresponding figures in a study conducted by Shek (2000) were 4.57, 4.64, and 4.60, respectively. It is suggested that warmth parenting has slightly increased during the past fifteen years. Parental warmth rated by parents and that rated by children were highly correlated, suggesting that warmth parenting perceived by parents and that perceived by children were highly similar. Moreover, around 65% parent-child dyads provide consistent ratings on high or low parental warmth. The mean of the overall familial dysfunctional parenting was 3.61 and the corresponding figure was 3.57, in a study conducted by Department of Health (2004), suggesting that dysfunctional parenting in Hong Kong currently remains similar to that from ten years ago. The mean score of parental stress was 91.14 in this survey and 100.76 in a study conducted by Lam (1999), suggesting that stress levels of parents in Hong Kong have reduced during the past fifteen years.

Comparison Between Fathers and Mothers and Between Parent and Child Ratings

2.105 Fathers and mothers did not differ in parental warmth and parental stress, whereas fathers showed less dysfunctional parenting practice than mothers. These results were consistent with previous studies that no difference was reported between paternal warmth and maternal warmth (e.g., Eiden, Colder, Edwards, & Leonard, 2009; Shek, 1999), and between paternal stress and maternal stress (e.g., Davis & Carter, 2008), suggesting that in terms of warmth parenting and stress of being a parent, fathers and mothers were similar. In addition, mothers were more over-reactive to children's behaviors and thus showed more dysfunctional parenting practice than fathers. These results were consistent with previous findings that mothers were more over-reactive than fathers in both laboratory observation and self-report (Arnold & O'Leary, 1997), partly because mothers had close and frequent daily interaction with children (Mackey & Day, 1979) and provide most of the discipline for children's misbehaviors (Arnold & O'Leary, 1997).

2.106 Both parents and children consistently reported better mother-child relationship than father-child relationship, partly because mothers spent more time and communicate more with the child than their fathers in daily life (Johnson, Li, Kendall, Strazdins, & Jacoby, 2013). These findings are also consistent with previous studies in which better mother-child relationship than father-child relationship were observed (e.g., Kochanska, Aksan, Prisco, & Adams, 2008; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008).

2.107 Parental warmth perceived by parents and that perceived by children age 9~14 were highly consistent. These results suggested that parents and children had similar perception on the parents' warmth parenting style and that the instrument measuring warmth versus harsh parenting is applicable for implementation on both parents and children (Ip et al., 2008; Shek, 2009) and consistent results would be observed. Because only warmth parenting style was rated by both parents and children in this survey, whether parents and children had similar perception on parenting practice and other parenting variables remains unknown and to be answered by the focused group study.

Family Structures, Parenting and Child Outcomes

2.108 Most family structure variables affected parenting, except the local versus immigrant family variable. First marriage families, both-parent families, high SES families and one-child families showed higher parental warmth, less dysfunctional parenting practice, lower parental stress, and better parent-child relationship than non-first marriage families, single parent families, low SES families, and multiple child families, respectively. These results are consistent with previous findings. First, remarried families and first-marriage families differed in family dynamics and child adjustment in ways that parents in remarried

families had more conflicts (Barber & Lyons, 1994), more dysfunctional parenting, (Mekos, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1996) and higher stress (Hetherington, 1989) than did first-marriage families. Second, compared to single-parent families, parents who had support from their spouses and shared parenting responsibility with their spouses showed lower level of stress (Compas & Williams, 1990), better parent-child relationship (Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001), and more parental warmth and less parental harshness (Horowitz, 1994). Third, SES played a significant role in parenting styles and parenting behaviors. Parents from low SES families had constraint in life provision and thus had to spend more time and emerge in earning resources than in attending to the family (Conger et al., 1990). Therefore, they showed less warmth parenting style to children (Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996), more dysfunctional parenting practice (Dumas et al., 2005), more parental stress (Pinderhughes et al., 2000), and worse relationship with children (Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002) than parents from high SES families. Lastly, the number of children contributed to parenting. Families with only one child may have less workload and burden of child rearing than families with multiple children. Therefore, parents perceived less stress and were able to be more patient with the child and show higher parental warmth (Quoss & Zhao, 1995) and better parent-child relationship (Chow & Zhao, 1996).

2.109 Family structures affected all variables of maternal parenting; whereas only SES consistently affected paternal parenting. It is possible that mothers were major caregivers in the family and were vulnerable to influences of family structure such as remarried family and number of children. A previous study has shown that family SES affect maternal stress more than paternal stress (Benzies, Harrison, & Magill-Evans, 2004), which is different from the results of this survey that SES also affected paternal stress. Because few previous studies had specifically compared the effects of family structures on paternal parenting and on maternal parenting, more investigations and observations are required before researchers reach a convincing conclusion.

2.110 Among all demographics that represented family structures, only family SES affected many child outcomes. Specifically, children aged 3~8 in high SES families showed better psychological wellness, higher academic competence, and higher school motivation than those in low SES families. For children aged 9~14, high family SES resulted in better psychological wellness, higher self-esteem, better academic self-concept, and higher learning competence. These results were consistent with previous findings that high SES was a strong predictor of positive physical and psychological development in children as well as child well-beings (e.g., Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; McLoyd, 1998), and that high SES resulted in better academic achievement of children (e.g., Sirin, 2005).

Parenting Child Outcomes and Family Well-being

2.111 Parental warmth, parenting practice, parental stress, and parent-child relationship were associated with all child outcomes. Higher parental warmth, less dysfunctional parenting practice, lower levels of parental stress, and better parent-child relationship were associated with higher psychological success, better physical health, and better academic success of the children. In addition, those parenting variables were also associated with higher self-esteem of 9~14-year-old children. These results were consistent with previous findings that more parental warmth, less harsh parenting, and better parent-child relationship were associated with better behavioral adjustment (Cowan & Cowan, 2002; Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1998), better peer relationship (Deković & Meeus, 1997), better academic achievement (Pinquart, 2016), and learning motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Spera, 2005). Compared to children aged 3~8, association between academic success of children aged 9~14 and parental warmth and dysfunctional parenting is not so strong. It is possible that academic success of older children is also associated with emotional intelligence (Mavroveli & Sánchez-Ruiz, 2011) and peer influence (Caldas & Bankston, 1997).

2.112 While combining parent well-being and child well-being for representing family well-being (Zimmerman, 2013), it was found that all parenting variables and parent-child relationship were associated with family well-being. Higher parental warmth, less dysfunctional parenting practice, lower levels of parental stress, and better parent-child relationship resulted in better family well-being. These results were consistent with previous findings (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005) and suggested that parenting style, parenting practice, and parent-child relationships were important contributors to child well-being and overall well-being of a family (Strazdins et al., 2006; Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994).

Parenting Reduce Negative Effect of Low SES on Child Outcomes

2.113 Mediation analyses showed that the effects of family SES on child outcomes could be accounted for by parenting variables for both 3~8-year-old and 9~14-year-old children. In other words, even though children are in a low SES family, higher parental warmth, less dysfunctional parenting and parental stress, and better parent-child relationship can buffer the negative effect of low SES or lack of economic resources, and promote child well-being and family well-being, because family structures and environment have effect on children through parental responses and behaviors, which played a highly crucial role in child development (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Shek, 1999). These results were consistent with previous findings that parental conflicts explained the effect of family income and race on a child's well-being (Vandewater & Lansford, 1998), and that family income and parent education did

not directly affect the child's achievement but showed indirect effects through warmth parenting behaviors (Davis-Kean, 2005). These results also suggested that through improving quality of parenting and parent-child relationship, child well-being can be enhanced regardless of the adverse family conditions such as low SES.

Summary

2.114 In this survey, two-stage stratified sampling to randomly draw a sample representative for population of children aged 3~14 and their parents in Hong Kong. All parents completed questionnaires measuring parental warmth, dysfunctional parenting practice, parental stress, parent-child relationship, parent sense of competence of being a parent, and demographic information. Parents of children aged 3~8 also completed questionnaires regarding children's academic outcomes, including behavioral academic competence and school motivation. Children aged 9~14 completed questionnaires measuring their physical health, academic self-concept, and learning competence, and they also reported their perception of parental warmth, parental control, and parent-child relationship. A summary of the main results is shown in Annex 2.

2.115 Fathers and mothers differed in some parenting variables. In ratings by parents, paternal warmth and paternal stress were not significantly different from maternal warmth and maternal stress; whereas fathers showed less dysfunctional parenting than mothers and mothers perceived better mother-child relationship than the father-child relationship perceived by fathers. For the ratings by the children, child perceived maternal warmth were higher than child perceived paternal warmth and child perceived mother-child relationship was higher than father-child relationship. In addition, children perceived more control from mothers than from fathers. The difference between fathers and mothers were partly because mothers were the major caregivers in their children's daily lives. While comparing ratings between parent and child, we observed no difference. Child rated parental warmth was highly correlated with parent rated warmth. Moreover, while categorizing parents into high or low warmth group using median split of the parental warmth scores, around 65% parent-child dyads showed consistent categorization. These results suggested that parental warmth perceived by the parent themselves were similar to that perceived by the children.

2.116 Family structures affected most maternal parenting and some paternal parenting. More specifically, whether a family is immigrant family or not did not affect parenting, except that mothers from immigrant families had higher maternal stress than those from local families. First marriage mothers, mothers of both-parent families, mothers from high SES families, and mothers who had only one child showed higher maternal warmth, less dysfunctional parenting practices, less maternal stress, and better mother-child relationships

than their counter parties, namely non-first marriage mothers, single mothers, mothers from high SES families, and mothers who had more than one children, respectively. By contrast, except that SES affected all paternal parenting, whether a father was in his first marriage or not affected only dysfunctional parenting practice and parent-child relationship, and single fathers differed from non-single fathers and fathers with one child differed from fathers with more than one child only in dysfunctional parenting practice. These results suggest that mothers, who have taken up most work of parenting in the family, were affected by various family structures more than the fathers.

2.117 Parenting was associated with most child outcomes. Higher warmth parenting and better parent-child relationship; whereas less dysfunctional parenting practice and less parental stress, were associated with less behavioral and psychological problems, more prosocial behaviors, better physical health, higher self-esteem (for children aged 9~14 only) and better academic outcomes of children. Moreover, parenting variables were also associated with overall child well-beings and overall family well-being. These results suggest that parenting style, parenting practice, parental stress, and parent-child relationship in the family play an important role in family well-being.

2.118 Family structures did not affect child outcomes, except SES and immigrant family. More specifically, children from high SES families showed less behavioral and psychological problems and better academic outcomes, and children from immigrant families were rated with better physical health than those from local families. Nonetheless, negative effects of SES on child outcomes can be reduced by positive parenting, such as high parental warmth, quality parent-child relationship, few dysfunctional parenting practice, and low parental stress. These results further emphasized the important role of parenting on child outcomes in buffering adverse family environment.

2.119 Several limitations of this survey should be considered while reading the report. First, the study is a cross-sectional study that cannot draw any conclusions about cause-effect relationships. Longitudinal studies can be considered in future to obtain better understanding of cause-effect relationships between parenting practices and its related outcomes. Second, the data is based on self-report of parents and children and no independent observations were included in the study. In future studies, the objective measures and triangulation methodology can be adopted to authenticate the findings. Third, because the current sample includes a larger proportion of low income families than does the Hong Kong population, parenting practices and child outcomes of high income families are less well represented. Purposive match of proportion of high and low income families can be considered in future studies. Forth, the proportion of single-parent families in the current sample is larger than that in the

Hong Kong population. A proportionally matched sample in terms of single- and bi-parents families can be considered in future studies.

Chapter 3

Results of Focus Group Discussion with Parents

Introduction

3.1 This chapter is based on the results of focus group interviews with parents in Hong Kong. It aims to identify the relationships between family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes based on qualitative data presented by parent informants who participated in the focus group interviews of this study. The focus groups were arranged with an explicit objective of exploring parenting practices in Hong Kong. For the purposes of this chapter, the method of data collection, background of parent informants who took part in the focus group discussion, and their views on family well-being, parenting and child outcomes are presented. The results are integrated and presented by using the ecological framework.

3.2 The ecological framework is used to integrate the findings from the focus group discussion with parent informants because it is highly relevant to understand child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino, 1992; Belsky, 1992). Basically, the ecological framework considers a child's development within the context of the systems of relationship that form his or her environment. Besides the immediate interactional context in which parenting and parent-child interactional processes take place, the ecological framework will also consider the broader contexts comprising the school, work, community and culture that affect child outcomes. Therefore, it is used to analyze and understand the findings presented by the parent informants in the focus group discussion.

Methods

3.3 Focus group discussion is a data collection method which can be used to capture a wide spectrum of views on the issues to be studied (Krueger and Casey, 2015; Greenbaum, 1998). It provides a comfortable environment where participants can share their views freely and openly. When participants feel safe to participate in the focus group discussion, they can freely discuss the topic of interest. In so doing, they help the researchers to understand their experiences and views on family well-being, parenting practices and child outcomes. Since participants are free to share their experiences and give their views, qualitative data gathered from focus groups can provide a more in-depth understanding of the topic.

Sampling and Informants

3.4 Fifteen focus groups were conducted between October 7, 2015 and May 31, 2016, to seek the experiences and views of the parent informants in Hong Kong. These 15 focus groups involve a total of 79 participants who were mostly recruited from parent respondents who participated in the school survey. An item was included in the last part of the parent questionnaire where parent respondents were asked to indicate if they were willingly to be invited to come for a focus group discussion. Of the 2888 parent respondents who filled the parent questionnaire in the school survey, 385 parent respondents gave a positive reply and

left their contact information. In the end, 44 parents actually agreed and turned up for the focus group discussion.

3.5 Though representativeness and transferability of results are not the concerns of the focus group discussion, efforts were made to ensure views are gathered from parents of different backgrounds, such as those who are single parents, new immigrant parents, parents of ethnic minorities, and parents with children with special learning needs. For this purpose, 3 social service agencies and a parent group were contacted and invited to refer parent service users to the consultant team for focus group discussion. In the end, a total of 35 parents from these social services were recruited for the focus group interview.

3.6 All focus group informants participated in this part of the study on a voluntary basis. The purposes of the focus group discussion were explained, that the discussion process will be recorded and transcribed verbatim, as well as their rights as informants. They were assured that information shared by them would only be used exclusively in this study and would be kept in confidence. They all gave their written consents before the focus group discussion began (Appendix E). All focus group discussions were held either in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University or in the agencies to which participants belonged.

Focus Group Discussion Guide

3.7 A set of open questions related to the topic was developed for the focus group discussion. The guide serves to cover the areas of major concerns to be explored with the parent informants. Not being an exclusive list of discussion topics, the guide includes the following areas:

- a. Self-introduction of the participants;
- b. Views on family well-being and a happy family;
- c. Expectations of participants on their child(ren);
- d. Sharing of parenting practices and child outcome;
- e. Difficulties in the parenting process;
- f. Views on services for parents and families; and
- g. Other views.

3.8 All focus groups were conducted by a moderator who was a member of the research team. As far as possible, discussions would be conducted following the order of the question items. Where interesting or insightful points were brought up in the discussions, the moderator would ask the participants to share their views on these points. This ensures that understanding of the topic would not be restricted by the discussion guide. All focus group discussion sessions lasted between 1 hour 30 minutes and 2 hours.

Data Management and Analysis

3.9 Field-notes were jotted down after each focus group session to remind researchers of the salient results emerged in the discussion sessions. All focus group discussion processes were audio or video recorded. With the exception of the focus group discussion with South Asian parent informants, the recorded discussion processes were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The transcribed materials were then coded and themed with respect to the objectives of this study. Due to the large volume of qualitative data gathered, only those data which are relevant to this study were used for analysis and presented in this report.

Results

Demographic Background of the Informants

3.10 Fifteen focus groups were conducted and it involved a total of 79 participants (60 mothers and 19 fathers). The mean age of the participants is 39.67 (S.D.= 5.883). Ten parent informants are ethnic minorities including 5 Pakistani, 3 Indians and 2 Nepalese. Among all the informants, 23 of them had lived in Hong Kong for less than seven years. Six of them are single parents. Among the married informants, 67 of them live in a nuclear family and 5 live in an extended family. More than half of the parent informants (54.4%) have two children in their family. Twenty-one informants have only one child and the remaining (19.0%) have three or more but not more than five children.

3.11 Sixty-three point six percent (63.6%) of the informants has received secondary education or below; while the others received tertiary education or above. Thirty-four parent informants are housewives; two unemployed and the rest of them (53.9%) are working parents. Among the working parents, 61.4% of them earn a personal monthly income that is higher than the median monthly employment earnings of employed persons in 2015. According to the median of family income by household size from Hong Kong Quarterly Report on General Household Survey for the first quarter of 2016, 52.2% of the parent informants had a family income lower than the median.

Family Well-being

Family Well-being and Family Happiness

3.12 In the focus group discussion process, informants were asked for their views and understanding on 'family well-being'. The term does not appear to be a common conceptual resource for most of the informants in thinking about a family. The language which is more likely to be used by them is whether a family is happy or not. Not surprisingly, therefore, most of the informants tend to understand family well-being synonymously with family happiness (快樂家庭/幸福家庭), that is, in terms of how happy a family is. Generally speaking, according to most of the parent informants, a happy family is one which is free from problems and every family member and children in particular are happy. More nuance analysis of what they said about a happy family shows that there are two types of family

well-being, namely financial family well-being and psycho-emotional family well-being.

Financial Family Well-being and Psycho-emotional Family Well-being

3.13 Financial family well-being refers to the material basis that constitutes family happiness. To informants, a family has to be financially sufficient to meet the material needs of its members in order for it to be a happy one. In the focus group discussions, however, when asked about their views on family well-being, the first mentioned is least likely to be its financial and material basis. Almost without exception, informants focused more on the psycho-emotional aspects, like communication, care and support, mutual understanding, respect for each other, good family relationships, quality family time, etc.

3.14 Often, the material basis of family well-being was recognized and discussed in response to follow up questions raised by the moderator. When asked why they did not mention financial well-being as they share their understanding of family well-being, a common response from the informants is that it is “*taken for granted*”. Family well-being is unlikely possible without a certain level of economic and material security being achieved. For example, a full-time working father informant said, “*It will be less stressful for the family when it is financially sufficient. Economic insecurity made it necessary for parents to work longer and have less time to spend with the children, which in turn results in poor parent-child relationship.*”(G, Group10) His view was echoed by a 38-year-old mother informant in another focus group. She said, “*Even if they (parents) want to spend more time with their children, they would be too tired to do so (after work). Financial well-being is necessary for family well-being.*” (B, Group 8)

3.15 Despite the brevity of their discussions, a clear view expressed on financial condition and material basis is that they are only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for family well-being. Once a certain level of financial condition is assured, informants consider that such non-tangible qualities like love, care, communication, support, and family time, are more important. A dominant discussion among the informants focused on the importance of these qualities in contributing to the overall family happiness, which is an indicator of subjective well-being of the family. This is evident in quite a number of informants who, or whose spouse quit full-time job so that they can take good care of the family. They believe more quality time with their family is contributory to its overall happiness and well-being.

3.16 A frequently mentioned psycho-emotional family well-being is good communication among family members. A 34-year-old full time working mother, H, from Group 8 explained why good communication is so important, “*Communications between the spouses enhances good spousal relationship which in turn enhances better relationship between the parent and the children. It sets a good example for the children to follow.*” What this mother informant had said illustrates that family well-being is indicated by good communication among the family members. Good communication, good relationship, and good examples are in fact different aspects of good family well-being.

3.17 Another often-mentioned psycho-emotional family well-being is care and love among family members. It has long been held that Asian people, Chinese in particular, are rather implicit in expressing love. This focus group revealed that this is no longer the case. Informants clearly avowed love as an important family quality. What a 43-year-old mother informant said typifies this view. She believed that love and care for other family members as quality of family well-being should be expressed through actions. As she said, *“We should show our love to one another by actions. For example, we can hug each other more to express our love, and we should also apologize to them when we are wrong, just to show that we love them and care about their feelings.”* (Y, Group 9)

3.18 Another mother informant, who is a social worker, from the same group added that quality family time also contributes to family well-being. *“My husband started to work at home three years ago...this is much better for the children because they feel safer with someone at home and I don’t have to worry about them at work.”* She mentioned because she and her husband were willing to spend time and love one another, their children developed similar family core values. Similarly, a mother informant with a child with special needs also shared the view that personal time is an important factor contributing to family well-being. *“It would be better if we (informant and her husband) and our children can have some personal space and time to rest under the stressful circumstances we are facing. I think this could help enhance harmony within the family”* said M in Group 11.

Family Well-being and Family Functioning

3.19 Psycho-emotional aspects of family well-being such as love, care and respect for family members, good communication, support and appreciation, effective parenting, healthy and obedient children with good academic results are in fact related to how well a family is functioning. In this sense, family well-being is also premised on good family functioning. The better a family functions, the happier it is, and the higher its family well-being. Good family functioning is not the privilege of certain families. Every family can function well. A group of single parents shared how much better their families had become with the disappearance of family conflicts and threats of violence from their spouses following their divorces. Similarly, an ethnic mother shared how much her family is better with the support of the older generation in child care.

3.20 A well-functioning family is one in which family members shared a good relationship with each other and family members live happily with each other. A divorced mother informant shared how a single-parent family like hers can be a well-functioning family when it is free from conflicts, *“Though he (ex-husband) is not living with us now, my daughter is healthier and happier than we were living together...sometimes it is not necessarily the best for the child with two (conflicting) parents being together, at least this is the case for my family.”* (A, Group 15) Another mother informant with two children suffering from asthma and eczema respectively gave her family full marks in terms of how happy her family is. She said, *“A happy family is not one that is problem free. It is about the attitude on how you look at the issues.”* (Mrs. Cheung, Group 13)

Parenting in Hong Kong

3.21 All parent informants are with at least a child under 15. In the focus group discussions, they were asked to share their experiences and views on parenting in terms of their expectations for the children, their parenting methods, alongside their evaluation on their own parenting competence, the difficulties, as well as level and sources of stress in parenting.

Parenting Goals

3.22 Parents were not familiar with the term ‘parenting goal’ in the focus group discussion. This does not appear to be a common phrase in their everyday language. Therefore, they were asked to share 3 expectations for their children instead. In almost every group, the 3 most frequently mentioned parental expectations are academic performance, happiness, and health. Other expectations include obedience, filial piety, a good moral character, a good sense of responsibility, self-discipline, a good career, and a bright future. A few parents who are Christians also hoped that their children could practice their religion faithfully.

Academic Performance

3.23 Common with parents in other Chinese societies, an overwhelming majority of parents participating in the focus group discussions expected that their children would be doing well academically. Many of them in fact highly expected their children to excel academically. Some who considered their expectation ‘reasonable’ mentioned that they were unlikely to be pleased with their children’s academic performance if they got less than 70 marks in an assessment. Some parents expected that their children could complete their homework everyday so that there would not be complaints from their teachers.

3.24 Parent informants’ high academic expectations on their children are often linked with a well-intended parental wish for a good career and a bright future for their children. It is not the case that this is limited only to the Chinese parents. This observation in fact cut across parent informants of different backgrounds. As parents, they generally believed that it is their responsibility to develop academic competence, if not academic excellence in their children so that they can get into a good primary school, a good secondary school, and a good university as an assurance for a good career with good incomes.

3.25 For instance, an Indian mother who just arrived in Hong Kong related that her 8-year-old son is not able to catch up with the Chinese lessons. Like parents of other ethnic minorities who voiced similar concerns, she thought that this would negatively affect his chance of getting into a good secondary school, hence his chance of having a good career in the future. A bank manageress was raising her children with a view to developing them into a medical doctor and a scientist. The majority of parents, especially those of working class origin, firmly believed that academic achievement is the key to a good job with gainful income.

Good Health

3.26 Like academic excellence, the majority of parents mentioned that they hope to see their children enjoy good health. However, compared with academic excellence, they were less elaborative on this parental expectation. Many of them just included “*health*” in their list of parental expectations for their children. From what they said, it seems that health refers more to physical health and is seemingly equivalent to an absence of physical illness. Some consider a positive personality a component of health. As a mother informant said, “*I hope he can have a healthy personality, with love for others, and being positive as well.*” (S, Group 4) A father informant did not know how to elaborate on what he actually meant by health. He said he just hoped that his kids would be like any other ‘normal’ kids in Hong Kong, “*enjoying good health, be happy and be able to know when to study and when to play.*”

3.27 Parent informants who are relatively more able to articulate what they mean by health are those with a child with special needs. One parent informant put it this way, “*it (health) includes almost everything, like (absence of) hyperactivity, dyslexia, illnesses.... Nowadays, it is not easy to see a doctor. It incurs a lot of money. Seeing a physiotherapist also needs a lot of money.*” Another parent informant in the same group accepted that dyslexia is an unchangeable fact of her two daughters. She did not define health in terms of absence of problems. Rather, she regarded health to include psychological health, “*I hope to see my child to enjoy health, with good psychological qualities..... Only with good psychological qualities can they get along well with other people and handle things successfully.*”

Happiness

3.28 Raising a child who is happy is also considered by many parent informants as an important parenting goal. However, like health, most parents only mentioned “*happiness*” in passing when they give their list of parental expectations for their children. Some parents took it for granted that it is their responsibility as parents to raise happy children. However, they did not seem to have given much thought on what made a happy child and how parenting could contribute to a happy child. Some included ‘raising a happy child’ in their list of parental expectations probably as a socially desirable response that is in response to other parent informants who raised “*happiness*” as a parenting goal.

3.29 However, a few parents were actually quite committed in fostering happy children in their family. These parent informants probably have considered the detrimental effects of the competitive and stressful environment in Hong Kong on children. One parent informant said, “*a good (happy) childhood. I know that a lot of research studies reported that the overall happiness index in Hong Kong is very low.*” She added, “*Stress is unavoidable in adulthood, so, we need to give our children a happy childhood*” (Mrs. Cho, Group 11). A mother informant in another focus group shared a similar view, “*after all, I hope that they can be happy people. My aim is not to raise them to become great people.... Adults are miserable. Now that they (her children) are young, I hope that they can live happily. When they come out to work in the society, they are bound to have a lot of stress.*” (Mrs. Chan,

Group 6)

Other Parental Expectations

3.30 Other commonly mentioned parental expectations cluster around two areas. The first cluster includes those cultural expectations of children, like turning out filial children who are obedient to their parents and other senior family members, and being polite and able to get along with other people. Though this list of parental expectations is more reflective of the concerns of the Chinese parents, it should not be assumed that non-Chinese parents are free of cultural expectations. A common parenting goal shared by the Indian and Pakistani mothers who took part in the focus group interview is that they hope to bring up children who do not only respect their parents, but also respect their grandparents. Parenting necessarily takes place in social and cultural contexts. As such, these parenting goals are believed to have mirrored the expectations of the socio-cultural context in which parents and families live.

3.31 Another set of parental expectations is turning out children who can make a good living in the future. This is often framed in terms of expecting their children to be “*good citizens*”, “*successful people*”, “*one with a good career*”, “*one who can get a job*”, or “*one who can make a living to support the family*”. This set of parental expectations is future-oriented. However, they are intimately linked to their expectation for the academic achievement of their children, which is more present-oriented. Parents often highly expect their children to achieve academically by getting good marks in dictations, tests and examinations.

3.32 Academic achievement as a parenting goal is vividly expressed by a lot of parents in the focus groups. For instance, a new immigrant mother informant shared in her group what she told her son, “*the higher you can achieve academically, the better your future career will be, and the more benefits you will be able to enjoy.*” (Sheung, Group 4) Parents generally hope that their children can have a good future, which easily becomes their long term parenting goal. As such, it is easy to understand that most parent informants would try their best to help their children attain good academic achievements to pave the way for a good career in the future.

Parenting Methods

3.33 Achievement of parenting goals depends a lot on whether parents know how to develop their children in the direction of their goals and expectation for their children. This is often discussed in terms of parenting means, parenting strategies, parenting practices, or in more laymen term, parenting methods. If there is a gap between parental expectations and parenting means, parent-child relationship will be strained and the parenting goals will unlikely be achieved. In the focus group discussion, parent informants were also asked to share their experience in parenting their children. From what they shared, the following themes on parenting methods can be discerned.

Parent-centered and Child-centered Parenting

3.34 From the focus group discussions, a salient theme which emerged in parenting among the informants is whether they give more emphasis on their own parental expectations or on the needs of their children, as they parent their children. Parent-centered child rearing tend to put the fulfillment of parental expectations as a top priority, if not their only concern. It is not that these parents do not love their children. Like most of the parents, these parents care about their kids, sacrifice their time for them, and provide good education opportunities to their children. However, if these parents are too goal-directed and result oriented, they can experience a lot of frustrations in parenting their child and create constant stresses in the parent-child relationship.

3.35 Child-centered parenting refers to parenting practices which would consider the needs, voices, and circumstances of the child in fulfilling their parental role, if not giving a priority to them. Child-centered parents are different from parent-centered parents not because they do not have any parental expectations for their children. They do have their parenting goals. Like parent-centered parents, most of them hope that their children can achieve good academic results, respect parents and senior family members, be polite to other people, and have a good future. They are different from the parent-centered parents in that they are not inclined to impose these expectations and goals on their children. They are also more likely to adjust their parenting methods according to the needs and circumstances of their children.

3.36 As revealed in the focus groups, both parent-centered and child-centered parenting can be good or bad. The crucial thing is that parents are able to discern if their own parenting style is contributing to their well-intent parenting goal. Both parenting styles can be dysfunctional, if they are carried to an extreme. If totally ignoring the child circumstances, parenting can be authoritarian and harmful to the children. For instance, a mother informant reported that her husband expected their mentally disabled child to be just like any other 'normal' child. He was very harsh to him, often seriously punishing him for not performing like another other child almost to the point of abusing him.

3.37 This tendency to ignore the circumstances of the children in parenting also happen in some other parents with children with special learning needs. A father informant with an SEN child recalled that he was reluctant to accept that his daughter was diagnosed with dyslexia. He trained her intensively in reading and writing hoping that she could become 'normal'. Fortunately, he finally recognized that he should accept his daughter as she was. It is understood that child-centered parenting must not necessarily be good because recent research studies do show that child-centered parenting undergo the risk of producing narcissistic children who lack the capacity to persevere and cope with difficulties. However, a failure to address the circumstances of the children is often a problem in parenting among the informants.

3.38 Participants in the focus group discussions are all Chinese or South Asian ethnic minorities. No western parents are included. Perhaps for this reason, parent-centered parenting practices are very common, among the informants. However, there are some

informants who shared that they suffered a lot of goodwill but authoritarian practices of their own parents. There are also informants who used to be more self-centered in their parenting practices which they found did not work. Both these parents changed their parenting towards more child-centered practices. Their parenting practices usually represent a negotiation of parental expectations and child circumstances. It is not the case that they do not have their parenting goals, just that they know it is equally relevant to take into account how parenting methods to reach these goals should be adjusted according to the unique situations of their children.

3.39 For instance, Mrs. Chan from group 6 recalled that she had suffered a lot because her parents had pushed her very hard to excel academically. There, she told herself that she would not do the same to her children and wish that they could have a happy childhood. Another mother informant with a child with special needs wished her daughter could perform well academically, not until she found out that her daughter is experiencing high level of stress and anxiety that she decided to stop pushing her.

Parenting by Instruction and Parenting by Example

3.40 Keeping children within bounds and having them developed in expected trajectory is important if parents are to reach their parenting goals. As said, the majority of parent informants are more parent-centered. They focus on their children's academic attainment and are mindful to see that they are able to develop pro-social qualities like being polite to others. They expect their children to be obedient and cooperative in making their parenting goals achievable. Some parent informants who participated in the focus group discussions in fact apparently hold the traditional view that children should follow if not submit to parental instructions, especially when these instructions are for their own good.

3.41 Child protocol like keeping a balanced diet, finishing homework on time, not being over-indulgent in electronic games, and sleeping early are problems in themselves. As parent informants generally understood, they are for the good of their children. It only becomes an issue if parents lack the means and strategies to help children follow these protocols. Traditional Chinese discourse on raising good children is whether people parent their child by mouth or by example. As far as parenting by word is concerned, results of the focus group discussions reveal that parents tend more to use instructions and commands in requiring their children to following behavioral protocol. There are also some parents who shared that parenting by commands does not work and they are now resorting to setting examples for their children. For instance, a housewife informant said her two children complained to her that she was using her digital device while they weren't allowed to use it at the same time. She noted the problem and said, "*I try to avoid using it in front of them and use it when they are asleep now.*" (Mrs. Lee, Group 6)

3.42 Parenting by word is rather common among parent informants of this study. However, parents differ in the ways they instruct their children. A more common pattern is what can be called 'escalatory instructions'. In seeing children behave beyond their expectation, parents usually "ask" their children to comply with their instruction. When this

does not work, and this is usually the case, they would “command” them to be compliant, usually in the forms of “shouting” at them or “threatening” them with corporal punishment. Parents shared that authoritative commands usually work for a short, but children’s compliance will not last long. This commonly ends up in some form of physical punishments. Parents are aware of the limitations and legal implications of corporal punishments. However, they shared that they just cannot control themselves sometimes. As a new immigrant mother informant with a 6-year-old daughter said, *“sometimes my anger is so much escalated by her (the child) behavior; I cannot control it... I hit her because I want her to behave well.”* (San, Group 4)

3.43 Some parents do reveal that their parenting practices are more instructive by nature. However, their parenting practices are markedly different from that of ‘escalatory instructions’. These parents prefer to talk to their children, reason with them, and let them know the rationales behind their instructions. Instead of ordering the children to take up some housework duties, a mother informant who is a housewife asked her children *“Did you realize mommy has been busy doing housework all day long? ...I asked for your help not because I am lazy but because I need your help...do you think you can help mommy with it?”* (C, from Group 8). Her children were willing to do the housework because they saw their mother’s need for help.

3.44 Young parents who are better educated are more inclined to this way of parenting their young children. Some parents learn this non-authoritarian parenting from parent seminars in the schools. They try them, find them useful, and then incorporate them into their parenting repertoires. There are also parents who discovered that their authoritarian parenting no longer works, especially when their children are getting older. Such parents adjust their parenting method to reason more with their children.

Solo Parenting and Shared Parenting

3.45 Solo parenting characterizes a lot of single parent families, where the custodian parent is responsible for all the parenting tasks alone. When parenting is not shared by a spouse or other family members, it can place heavy burden on the custodian parent. At some critical time, it can be very stressful as well. As one single mother shared in one of the focus groups, her little child once got injured in the school and was sent to a hospital. While she was rushing to the hospital to find out what had happened to her, she fell on the way, hurt herself, and was sent to another hospital. No one was then available to take care of her child in the hospital and she felt very helpless.

3.46 Parenting is less stressful when it is shared by other members in the family, especially in single parent families. Some single-mothers shared that, though without the support of the other spouse, they took on their parenting tasks relatively easier because they are adequately supported by their own mothers or other family members. A single-mother informant described that her brother gave her such a big hand as if he was the head of her family. She is grateful for his support (E, Group 15). This is the same for the two-parent families. Some mother informants shared that it is stressful to be a full-time mother because

parenting and doing housework together are very demanding tasks. Also, when their husbands volunteer to share the parenting tasks, they feel very grateful and warm-hearted. *“I felt warm-hearted when my husband took the initiative to wash the clothes when I was ill...”*, *“A caring greeting from him is a kind of spiritual support to me.”* (Mrs. Chiu, Group. 13)

Consistent and Conflictual Parenting

3.47 While shared parenting is generally considered to be good for both the parents and the children, there are times that parents are divergent in the way they handle their children’s behaviors. This is in fact a very common problem when parenting is shared between the two spouses, when child-minding is assisted by grand-parents or by the maids. Inconsistency in parenting and child-minding often lead to bad child outcomes, and poor spousal relationship, which again is detrimental to children’s development. As a mother informant said, *“we used to have a lot conflicts in teaching our son. I taught him one way and he taught him the opposite. So I told him (my husband) that there is no way we could teach our son well. Whose way, mine or yours, do you expect our son to follow?”*

3.48 Consistent parenting is not something which is bestowed on a family. From what the parent informants shared in the focus group discussions, it is more an earned achievement acquired through learning. Two important factors contributing to consistent parenting include a good spousal relationship and good communication. For instance, a 27-year-old mother informant shared how she resolved differences in parenting with her husband this way, *“we used to be (very different in parenting). I discussed this with my husband. Since we are so different (in handling our sons’ problem), I would rather you teach them alone. Or you would leave me to teach them instead.... We then have some tacit understanding. When I am dealing with their problem, he keeps quiet. And when he is doing the job, I remain silent....”* (Ha, Group 4). What this informant tells is that she had a talk with her husband about the inconsistency in parenting and sought to be better parents through communication, and it works!

3.49 These two factors are in fact closely related to each other. Poor spousal relationship affects effective communication. A 45-year-old mother shared that she and her husband used to have an unsatisfactory relationship which often made them run into conflict over the care of their two daughters. However, they joined a Christian church and learned to improve their relationship. As she said, *“we talked it (our differences) and we have more communication.”* (C, group 8) A good spousal relationship forms the basis of effective communication to resolve differences in parenting. When this is rewarded in improved child behaviors and outcomes, spousal relationship and communication is improved.

Parenting by Trial-and-error and Parenting through Learning

3.50 A host of factors are found to have limited the parenting effectiveness and efficacy of the parent informants. This includes their growing up experience, their parenting knowledge and skills, their relationship with spouse, the availability of support from extended family, work stresses etc. An overwhelming majority of parents have not received any parent

training. They meet a lot of difficulties and experience considerable level of stresses in the course of fulfilling parenting tasks. From time to time, they failed their parental role and they were frustrated. In fact, quite a number mentioned that they were “*regretful*” of what they had done to their children. “*I was so angry and I lost control of my own temper...I felt so guilty when I saw the bruise mark on her body the next day*” (San, Group 4). “*Thinking about what I had done (hitting his daughter), I know I was wrong...*” (Mr. Chu, Group 5). However, all parent informants who participate in the focus group study have not given up their parent role, even though they are still groping in uncertainty to being a better parent.

3.51 Parenting by trial and error is a fact among many of the parent informants. While making mistakes in parenting is inevitable, it causes harm to the children and negative feelings like regret in parents. Hence, it is detrimental to family well-being. Although mistakes in parenting are inevitable, a positive finding of this parents learn in different ways to improve their parenting if they are sensitive enough and if they want to. They learn from the good and bad examples of their own parents, they learn from their own parenting experiences, they learn from their children, they learn from their peers, and they learn from parenting programs organized in the schools and elsewhere. In fact, for quite a number of parent informants, their motive of joining the focus group is to listen to what others say about parenting. The same mother informant mentioned above said she learned to give herself and her daughter some time to calm down when she (her daughter) misbehaved, so that both can have good control of their emotions.

Parenting Stress

3.52 The informants were asked to complete a one-page demographic information sheet before the focus group discussion started. In one of the items, they were asked to evaluate their own parenting stress by rating a “1 to 10 scale”, “1” means very low parenting stress and “10” very high parenting stress. The mid-point score on the scale is 5.5. Results show that the average parenting stress score of the parent informants is 7.11 (S.D. = 2.10). Sixty-three parent informants (almost 80%) rated themselves over the mid-point score of 5.5 and 43 of them (45%) rated themselves “8” or above. These results show that parenting is very stressful in Hong Kong.

3.53 Parent informants presented a host of factors which contribute to difficulties and stresses in parenting. These include the special circumstances of their children, like those with disabilities and special learning needs. Children moving from one developmental stage to another also present challenges to parents, especially for children entering the adolescent stage. In addition to child factors, family is also a system which can be supportive or stressful to parenting. This includes spousal relationship and in-law relationship. When spousal and in-law relationships are good, parents can focus their energy on parenting their children. In cases where there are spousal and in-law conflicts, the family will turn into a stressful instead of a support system. As said, good relationship and communication among family members ensures effective parenting and family well-being.

3.54 Schools are also important in determining the level of parenting stresses. Some

parents pointed out that the time they have with their children are all focused on completing homework and preparing for dictation and tests, which makes them very stressful. Also, despite advocacy for “sunshine calls” in recent years in Hong Kong, reasons for communication between teachers and parents are still predominantly problem-focused. Quite some parent informants shared how anxious and stressful when they receive calls and complaints about their children’s failure to hand in homework assignments, unsatisfactory academic results, and behavioral problems in the school. One mother informant said the school policy on giving “red card” to misbehaved students brought her stress (Mrs. Ip from Group 6). In her opinion, these cards caused labeling effect on her child and it did not help to improve her child’s behavioral problems.

3.55 The relationship between parenting stress and school requirements is more complicated than a simple cause-and-effect relationship. Some parents do hope to send their children to good schools which produce academically achieved students. The strong achievement culture and its link to a good career for the children when they grow up reinforce the choice of parents for these “good” schools. If the qualities of their children are not matched with the school, however, the parent-child relationship will be strained and filled with stresses. A mother shared that she listened to a friend in choosing a “good” school for her daughter. However, the school was one which emphasized a lot on academic achievements. She was very stressed while pushing her daughter to meet the school standards and she often used corporal punishment on her. She said that she regretted to have chosen that school for her daughter. (San, group 4)

3.56 Work to family spillover is yet another factor affecting the level of parenting stress. The long working hours take away time from the family. When all parenting tasks are compressed within very short time, parents easily choose to focus on homework and study revisions with their children. Parenting becomes stressful when focusing on these areas. Some parent informants said that they have decided to quit job, work freelance, or part-time in order to ensure there is adequate time for parenting and housework. “When my son was studying in kindergarten, I focused on my work more and his teacher reflected that he was quite naughty at school. So, I decided to quit my job to look after him. His behavioral problems have improved a lot since then.” (Mrs. Yip, Group 6) These parent informants usually come from families which financial conditions are relatively more stable. For the majority of families, the conflict between work and family adds to the stresses of parenting.

Parenting Competence

3.57 In the one-page demographic information sheet, they were asked to evaluate their own parenting competence by rating on a “1 to 10 scale”, “1” means very low parenting competence and “10” very high. The mid-point score on the scale is 5.5. Results show that the average parenting competence score of all the parent informants is 6.3 (S.D. =1.77). Twenty-eight of them (35.4%) rated themselves a score of “5” or below. Based on their own rating, therefore, it can be said that informants consider their parenting competence is only somewhat better than a “pass”.

3.58 A convenient association between parenting stress and parenting competence are negative correlated, meaning that parents with high parenting competence will have lower parenting stress because they are better able to deal with the parenting tasks presented to them. However, bivariate analysis of the two variables show that this common sense association is not supported ($r=-.192$, sig. $=.90$). These means that high parenting competence and high stress can co-exist among the parents. Similarly, there are also parents with low parenting competence and low parenting stress.

3.59 Even for those who scored themselves “5” or below, their low rating does not mean that they fail themselves as parents. In the focus group interview, the overall impression is that the majority of parents can share some successful experiences in parenting as a result of their efforts. These include consistently reflecting on the effectiveness of their own parenting practices, quitting their jobs to have more time with their children, communicating with their spouse for a more consistent parenting practice, driving children with recognitions and appreciations, working out children’s school problems with the teachers, soliciting help and support from informal and formal sources, among others . When parents are aware that these successful experiences work to improve child outcomes, not only the repertoire of effective parenting practices will be expanded, their sense of parenting competence will also be augmented.

Child Outcomes

3.60 Child outcomes cannot be directly measured or observed in the focus groups, which were designed to include parent informants only. Since each focus group discussion was planned to last about 1.5 hours (actually many lasted to around 1.75 hours), the focus group discussion guide did not include items directly asking informants about the developmental outcomes of the children. During the discussion process in a number of focus groups, however, parent informants did touch some aspects of child outcomes, especially the relationship between child outcomes and their ways of parenting.

3.61 A common sense understanding of child outcomes is that they are dependent on the parenting practices and a host of other factors to which children are exposed. This is in fact a robust finding supported by a number of research studies in the past. For instance, parenting styles and parenting practices do affect child outcomes. However, based on the discussion among the parent informants, this may only be a partial fact. If parents are sensitive enough, less parent-centered parenting, foster a set of good parent-child and family relationship, and mediates the spillovers from schools and work, parenting can bring out desirable child outcomes.

3.62 The other side of the fact, as revealed in this study, is that children are autonomous agents who take on an active role in their own development. Children see, children learn. In addition to listening to their parents’ instruction, they also observe what they do and follow suit. As one father informant said, “*they (the children) are watching us. What do we preach to them... well, they may not understand. But what we actually do, they would imitate*” (Lung,

Group 7). Very often, children reminded us how parents and parenting should be like. A 50-year-old mother shared what she learned from one of her children, *“we used to be different in our parenting practices. He is strict and I am lenient. We often argued, sometimes very loudly.... One day, my son seriously asked me if I would divorce his father. I suddenly knew.... From then on, we tried to be more heedful in dealing with our differences in order to handle our son’s problem”* (A, Group 9).

3.63 Children actively tell parents how parenting should be like through a myriad of ways, spoken or unspoken. Often, their responses and behaviors subtly remind parents that they should seek to adjust their way of parenting them. A father informant P in group 11 shared what he observed from his daughter with anxiety disorder, *“we learn to let our young daughter decide (how much efforts she put in her studies)... She is really scared at the thought of dictations and tests, and she did not want to do her revision.”* The beauty of the discussion process is that it did not stop at the point of a good school producing a student with anxiety disorder. He continued, *“We started to think if her anxiety disorder is her problem or caused by the school. We began to let her decide... telling her that if you want to revise and prepare for them do that; if not, then don’t. We will tell the school that we don’t mind your marks....”*

3.64 P was positively echoed by another mother informant W in the group. *“My two daughters took a lot of initiatives (in their studies). But she (younger daughter) is dyslexic.”* W encouraged her daughter this way, *“Teachers only know how many marks you get. They do not see the efforts you put in your study.... This is the education system in HK.”* Her younger daughter talked back this way, *“why didn’t you tell the government?”* W further shared what she learned from her younger daughter, *“no matter how hard she tries, she is still among the bottom ten students...”* Eventually, this ignited a change in the parent and the little girl acquires a chance to learn in her own ways. W told others in the focus group, *“Whenever her elder sister started to revise (for the test), she hides herself under the bed.... We then know we have to let her decide. We decide to let her learn in her own ways.”*

3.65 To sum up from what has been learned from the parent informants, child outcomes are undoubtedly dependent on parenting practices. However, being active agents themselves, children also tell their parents if their way of parenting is working through their responses and behaviors, if not directly from their words. Through observing their children and listening to them carefully, parents can learn from their children how to be effective and responsive parents, and this is the basis of good child outcomes.

Discussions

Family Well-being, Parenting and Child Outcomes

3.66 From what has been gathered, family well-being is indicated by a family’s capability to fulfill the material needs of its members. In the majority of the families, this is achieved by parents taking on the breadwinner role to earn income for the family. However, material fulfillment alone does not constitute family well-being. As the majority of parent

informants agreed, family well-being is also reflected in the qualities of relationship among the family members, like love, care, concern, support, appreciation, and respect among them. Together with parents who assume the breadwinner role, these qualities are in fact characteristics and outcomes of the well-functioning families. In this sense, good family functioning is the basis of family well-being.

3.67 An important indicator of family well-being is happiness. In this sense, family well-being assures a happy family environment in which parents provide quality care and upbringing for their children to achieve the best developmental outcome. When families are characterized by such positive psycho-emotional qualities like love, care, concern, support, appreciation and respect, family relationships will be free from strains and stresses. Parents will be able to discharge their parental roles in the best possible way, and this is basis of good child outcomes. Viewed in this way, family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes are inter-related. A well-functioning family is the cornerstone of good child outcomes.

3.68 An integrated view of family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes premising on good family functioning is important in a number of ways with regards to raising children with good child outcomes, which is expressly a concern of parent informants and a much sought-after goal of the majority of parents in Hong Kong. First, this implies that no stand-alone measure is likely going to work in assuring good child outcomes. Working on children like giving them enough to eat, sending them to good schools, providing them with private tuition, arranging musical and artistic training for them etc. cannot assure good child outcomes, because these do not automatically produce happy children. Working with parents alone will neither be sufficient. Parents having good parenting knowledge and skills is no guarantee of them being effective parents if they are caught in stressful in-law relationships; same for other stand-alone measure.

3.69 This points to a second implication of an integrated view of family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes. If stand-alone measures will not automatically assure good child outcomes, what will? An insight from the focus group discussions is that good family functioning is the key to family well-being. Measures to enhance child outcomes need to be premised on a “family first” principle, which is defined as the family’s ability to fulfill the material and psycho-emotional needs of its members in different stages of development and in challenges presented to it both from within and without. “Family first” here means family and child support measures should focus on enhancing family functioning and family functioning with positive effects on parenting and child outcome, rather than working on the parents or on the children per se.

3.70 Lastly, an integrated view recognizes that the family is embedded in its physical, social, economic and cultural environment, which constantly presents threats, opportunities and challenges to it and its family members. As far as child outcomes are concerned, the ecological perspective considers that they are determined by the interaction among individuals, families, and other significant social systems in the environment. The resulting goodness-of-fit, or the lack of it, will determine whether child outcomes will be positive or

negative. Based on the ecological perspective, therefore, family well-being and good family functioning cannot be achieved without considering and addressing the challenges presented by the environment embedding the families.

Challenges to Families

3.71 Much has been said about factors within the families. As said, factors outside the families also positively and negatively affect family well-being, parenting and child outcomes. Directly or indirectly, focus group informants refer to three extra-familial factors in their discussion. These are school, work, and culture. In ecological terms, are interactions among microsystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, and their impacts on family, parenting and child outcomes should not be neglected in the overall analysis of the qualitative data from the focus group discussions.

Schools

3.72 A lot of parent informants mentioned different kinds of school-to-family spillover which leads to family relationship in general and the parent-child relationship in particular. They often mentioned the presence of a strong ethos in students' achievements in the schools where their children study. Parents reported, and many complained about heavy homework being assigned to their children every day, and assessment-driven learning contributes to frequent dictations and tests. As a result, time with children inevitably focus on parents ensuring that their children fulfill the homework requirements and assessment of the school. There is no time for other parent-child interaction, like heart-to-heart talks and sharing of experience and views. This is especially the case for dual-income families. *"People keep telling me to spend more time with my children after school... I have to work on shift; I cannot take leave anytime I want."* (H, Group 8) Another 50-year-old mother informant, A, from group 9 expressed similar concerns that their family has to sacrifice their weekend family time to do revision with their child.

3.73 Quite a number of parents mentioned that they were very stressed and disturbed in receiving calls from teachers that their children failed to meet the homework requirements and academic standards of the school. Although there have been attempts to advocate the so-called "sunshine calls" by the teachers in recent years, communication between teachers and parents still focus on children's problems rather than on their strengths and achievements. School ethos, deficiency of a strength perspective on students, stress-inducing teacher-parents communication, and lack of quality time between parents and children other than ensuring school compliance, all in one way or another contribute to strains and stresses in parent-child relationships which are detrimental to the family, parents, and child.

3.74 The ecological perspective finds support from what some parent informants shared in the focus group discussion. The problems presented above are more on the lack of fit between the student and the school, rather than being entirely a problem of the schools and teachers. One parent openly admitted that she chose a primary school based on information

given to her by another parent whose child studied in the same kindergarten with her daughter. Parents seem to consider the schools, but not their children while selecting a primary school. What they seem to lack is an awareness of the needs, characteristics, and preferences of their children. It is believed that parent education can play a more active role in raising parents' awareness of their children's circumstances, and with this, selecting a school which best fits their learning needs and future developments.

3.75 Benign communication between school and family is not the sole responsibility of one party. Schools and teachers also have a part to play. Parent informants in the focus group discussion revealed that they obtained a lot of school information from such informal sources like informal hearsay, contacts with parents while waiting for their children outside the schools, chat groups, and the websites. Schools can disseminate their education philosophy, goals, teaching and learning strategies, expectations on parents and children through their school websites, parent seminars and through their parent-teacher associations. Besides, "sunshine calls" can be a powerful tool to shift the perspectives of the teacher and parents to one emphasizing strengths of the students and to reduce family and parenting stress. They need to be pursued further.

Work

3.76 Work-to-family spillover is also another source of stress to the family and parents. It is detrimental not only to family relationships and parenting, but also child outcomes. An overwhelming majority of families are with one parent or both parents to support the family. Based on the discussion of the parent informants, work affects sole breadwinner and dual breadwinners equally, though not in the same ways. For working parents, the long working hours and parenting tasks scramble for the family time. Therefore, dual income is often at the expense of parent time with the children. For some families, the situation is somewhat mitigated by shared parenting between spouses. For others, this call for either parent to quit job, work part time, or take on freelance jobs in order to ensure children are adequately attended to in the family.

3.77 As some parents actually did, there are parents who left their full-time jobs to return to the family with a view to taking better care of their family. Not all parents who do this will solve the problem. Quite some mother informants revealed that they felt much more stressful in being full-time housewife taking care of the family and their children. As some of them said, they easily found an excuse to forgive themselves in not doing a good job when they both working and parenting. By being full-time mothers, they could no longer excuse themselves if they could not provide better parenting for their children. A full-time housewife informant said "*It seems to me that I must have done something wrong that led to their (her children) underachievement/misbehaviors... I have the responsibility to look after them every day, all the blame will be on me.*" (Mrs. Lee, Group 6). Another mother informant expressly said she felt very sorry for her husband who worked so hard to support the family while she was not able to take good care of the children. Some mother informants also said that their husbands blamed them for not doing their mother jobs well.

3.78 Based on the focus group discussions, it is quite obvious that there is often a lack of fit between work and family, which is one of the causes of stress in parenting. One spouse quitting work may not be able to help parenting less stressful and easier. In dual income families, it may be helpful to facilitate parents at some point in time during the course of raising children to take on their parenting roles and duties. Some efforts and measures by the government have been in place in the past few years. However, with regards to the circumstances of the tensions between families and work in Hong Kong, there seems to be a need for more concerted efforts to promote flexi-work arrangements or family-friendly employment measures among the employers to support families in Hong Kong, like what the Taiwanese and South Korean governments have done in the last couples of decades.

Culture

3.79 Child, parents, families, schools, and work are embedded in our culture which is, in ecological term, the macrosystem. Macrosystem is commonly referred to as the culture in which we live. Children, their parent and families, their schools, and their parent's workplace are all affected by the larger cultural context. As with the microsystem and exosystem, our culture presents a set of challenges to parenting in Hong Kong.

3.80 Like other Asian societies, human relationships in Hong Kong are intricately operated on a tacitly understood authority structure. Due to its adult-centric orientation, children's views and opinions are often not considered. This is one of the reasons for the observed parent-centeredness among the parent informants. The emphasis on obedience of children is easily understood in terms of the cultural expectation of turning out filial children. Similarly, South Asian parents emphasize respect for senior family members is also reflective of this authority structure based on seniority. It is easy for adults and parents to enforce cultural expectations on obedience by command, with force or the threat of it. However, reasoning with children is important, and in due course, listening to their views is indispensable. After all, children should learn that all people should be respected, not least the senior family members.

3.81 Another prevailing culture in Hong Kong is its emphasis on success and achievement, and people's success is commonly judged on the basis of their achievements, which are generally measured in terms of having a reputable career, and associated with it good financial capabilities. A lot of parent informants started to gear up their children to strive for a better future at a very young age. In lots of these families, their "here and now" is devoted to achieving the socially desirable goals in the future. A 45-year-old father informant said that he has organized mathematics and languages extracurricular classes for his 5-year-old son to prepare him for primary education so he would not experience difficulty in learning and to avoid blames from the teacher like his elder daughter did (Lung, Group 7). Another mother informant whose son is going to enter high school in the coming school year said that it made her felt nervous when other parents' concern was about the school's university admission rate in a high school admission seminar. These goal-directed parenting behaviors fuel parent-child relationship with stress. Their "present" is entirely lost to their

future. If like many informants said, health and happiness are goals to pursue in family well-being and in child outcomes; our society should try to regain health, happiness and well-being in the family. Health and happiness should replace achievement as a culturally sought after goal in parenting.

3.82 Last but not least, an obvious materialistic culture is discernable in Hong Kong. As pointed by many informants, material well-being is the basis of family well-being. However, although parent informants avow that psycho-emotional family well-being is equally if not more important, it seems that not much of parenting has this as the focus. It is not fair to say that parents are working long hours to make more income because they are materialistic. However, it is not too far from the truth in saying that meeting basic material needs often curtails an awareness of the importance of pursuing other qualities of family well-being, like happiness, good family relationship, and a well-functioning family by the parents. Hence, it may be necessary for the government to take the lead in promoting family well-being and positive family relationship by making reference to measures that have been in place in other Asian countries.

Summary

3.83 Based on the ecological perspective, this chapter attempts to recognize the child outcomes and parenting in their family context. In addition to their immediate family context, other systems like schools, work and culture also play a crucial role in determining parenting and child outcomes. An important postulate of the ecological perspective is that positive child outcomes are results of the goodness-of-fit among the systems, and the lack of fit is a sources of stress and problems for the people. Child outcomes are the result of children interacting with their parents, teachers, and people around. Children do not passively receive responses to the messages of people around them. They are also active agent who informs people about what they want through their behaviors and what they say. Hence, children should be heard and given sufficient attention as far as parenting is concerned.

3.84 It is true that parenting in Hong Kong is stressful and not easy. The stresses experienced by the parents again reflect lack of fit among different systems within which the parents discharge their parenting role. A positive message from the findings of the focus group discussions is that parents can be better parents if they want to. They can improve their parenting if and only if they have good awareness of their existing parenting methods do not work. From what the parent informants shared, they learn in different ways, from their own parents, their own parenting experience, their peers, and parent seminars and classes. Their efforts reflect their desire for improvements in parenting and achieving an adaptive fit with their children and the surrounding systems. Since parents can learn to be better parents, parent education is important in fostering positive child outcomes and overall family well-being.

3.85 The family is an immediate context where people parent their children. In this regard, family relationship and family functioning are important factors determining parenting and child outcomes. Where spousal relationship is good, support and shared parenting is possible. It is also easier to avoid conflictual parenting. Also, the extended family can also be a source of support or stress to the parents. Whether it will be a support or stress network will depend on the quality of relationship with the extended family members. Often, good relationship makes communication possible, and positive communication helps to reduce differences and misunderstanding in the child care and discipline. Grandparents are common source of help to take care of the children. Services to grandparents to make them effective child minders are helpful.

3.86 The school is an important microsystem interacting with the children and their parents. Parents often create a lot of parenting stress themselves in arranging their children to study in schools which do not fit their needs. More often than not, this reflects an absence of awareness of the needs and characteristics of their children, a failure to listen to the views of the children, an uncritical reception of the dominant socio-cultural values of achievement, and a failure to communicate with the schools. The implications of these findings suggest that there is a need for parents to be more aware of the needs of their children and to more child-centered in selecting schools for their children. In this regard, schools and parent education may play a more active role in helping parents achieve a better child-school relationship and in developing better communication between parents and the teachers. As said, the use of sunshine calls may help a lot to change the situation.

3.87 The work system affects the family through their negative spillover effects. Work provides income that contributes to the material well-being of the family. However, in a lot of families, it also strains family relationships. Achieving a better work-family fit is not easy. It is often possible for the relatively financial better off families where one parent, usually the mother who chooses to quit job or work part-time. As said, encouraging flexi-work arrangements and family friendly employment policies will be beneficial for the parents to discharge their parental duties. At the appropriate time, therefore, the government may also consider workable legislative measures to mediate and ease the tension between work and family.

3.88 Hong Kong is a metropolitan where east meets west. Its unique spatial and socio-cultural context makes parenting a challenging, if not difficult task. Living in a society with a strong material and achievement culture, parents often uncritically take in the dominant culture values as their parenting goals. Parenting inevitably sees it is important to turn out achieving children who are socially and culturally compliant. Parents need to learn how to mediate the effects of these dominant social and cultural values. In this regards, parent education has a role to turn out more critical and daring parents who can help their children to achieve in their own ways.

Chapter 4

Support for Family and Parenting in Other Places

Introduction

4.1 The territory-wide questionnaire survey established that family and parenting play an important role in various aspects of child outcomes in Hong Kong. Tantamount with this finding, results of the focus group study with parent informants revealed that there are a host of factors outside the family which affect family relationships and parenting practice, and consequently child outcomes. These factors include our schools, workplaces, and cultures. These extra-familial factors exert stress on the family and parenting practices when there is a lack of fit between the family and its larger environment. As a lot of research studies show, social support is a good buffer of the stresses with which family and parents faces in child rearing. When parenting improves, so will the child outcomes.

4.2 This chapter will examine policy measures on supporting family and parenting in different places through a desktop study. The four countries and places selected for this desktop study are the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. The United Kingdom is chosen because it is a western country which was used to make a lot of references before 1997. It is worthwhile to study what its governments had done in the area of family and parenting support in the past two decades and see if they can be a reference for Hong Kong. The other three places are chosen because together with Hong Kong, they used to be referred to as the four little dragons. They share a rather similar socio-cultural background with our society. What they do to support family and parenting can equally be a good reference for Hong Kong.

The United Kingdom

4.3 Conservative, New Labor, and Coalition governments alike in recent British governments generally recognize that, family life is private and that families bring up children, not governments. However, they also tend to understand that families cannot flourish without the government playing its roles. Cautious of not being intrusive in the families and the same time supportive of them, British governments have shown a three-pronged approach to supporting families and parents. These approaches are: encourage initiatives to develop strong families; focus on supporting family relationships by enabling families to help themselves; positively influence factors that can strengthen or weaken family life, such as the choices available on balancing employment with bringing up children thereby, cultivating good childrearing to help families raise their children, from pre-birth, through childhood adolescence, and beyond.

Key Operators of Family and Parenting Support

4.4 Between 2007 and 2010, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) under the Labor government was responsible for issues affecting people up

to the age of 19, including child protection and education in England. After the change of government in 2010, the DCSF was replaced by the Department for Education (DfE). Family and parenting support is included as the duties of the DfE. The duties cover childcare and childcare comprise, early learning and development, and early education.

4.5 In 1999, the Labor government set up the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) in response to a recommendation made in the Supporting Families Green Paper 1998. The Institute was renamed as the 'Family and Parenting Institute' (FPI) in 2006. In 2013, the FPI was merged with the Daycare Trust and is currently called the Family and Childcare Trust. The FPI is an independent charity aimed to make the UK a better place for families and children by working with different sectors of the community to offer practical help to families. Since its establishment, the FPI has taken a number of initiatives in supporting families and parenting, including the launching of the annual Parents Week, Family Friendly Schemes, Family Friendly Report Card, and Parenting Fund.

4.6 The Family and Parenting Institute (FPI) together with Parenting UK and King's College London established the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) in 2007 to improve the standard of parenting services; to transform the size and quality of the parenting workforce in England so that evidence-based parenting programs could be made available to families who need them; and to provide key training to over 4,000 practitioners in one of ten evidence-based models.⁴ An evaluation on NAPP's training offer in these 10 evidence-based parenting programs suggest that the NAPP initiative had accomplished a great deal in terms of increasing the skills of the parenting workforce and improving the availability of evidence-based parenting interventions.⁵

4.7 Parenting research plays a key role in developing parenting programs. In 2007, the Department for Education set up the National Academy for Parenting Research (NAPR) under the auspices of King's College London. The NAPR began its research program to find out what would make parenting work to create a difference on children's well-being and success, through an ambitious program of trials of different approaches to the parenting task, with a variety of children and young people. The NAPR used to receive funding support from the Central government for its research projects, but from 2012 it started an entire self-support system in terms of financing of research projects. Some of the research projects include the ones on developing instruments to measure parenting more easily and accurately.⁶ The NAPR contributes significantly to developing evidence-based parenting practices.

4.8 NGOs and charity organizations play an important role in the family and parenting

⁴ These 10 evidence-based programs include: Families and Schools Together (FAST), New Forest, Family Links, The Incredible Years, Mellow Parenting, Parenting Positively, The Solihull Approach, Triple P, Strengthening Families 10 – 14, and Strengthening Families/Strengthening Communities

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183457/DFE-RR186.pdf

⁶ <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/depts/cap/research/NAPR/index.aspx>

support. For more than 30 years, Family Lives⁷ has helped parents to deal with the changes that are a constant part of the family. This includes support for dads and mums, grandparents, stepparents and non-resident parents, to achieve the best relationship possible with the children and the best child outcomes. Family Lives also supports parenting professionals through offering a full range of professional training courses and workshops. With the conviction that happy children come from happy families, family lives currently supports families to improve the outcomes for over 1 million children each year. In 2014-15, about half (£2.408m) of its 5 million pound budget are funded by the Central Government sources, £1.493m from local authorities sources, and £0.689m from corporate bodies, trust & foundations, and individuals.⁸

4.9 Parenting UK⁹ is in fact part of family lives and the main membership body for parenting professionals. It is the place to go for the information and facts which parenting professionals need. Membership is open to any organization or individual that offers parenting services or has an interest in them. Members of Parenting UK are entitled to a wide range of benefits, which are designed to keep parenting professionals up to date with the latest news, research and resources. In 2015, the Parenting Program Developers' Group (PPGD) was formed to provide a forum for program developers' voices to be heard at national policy level. Through sharing best practice and expertise and offering of opportunities for networking with likeminded professionals, parenting professionals are kept up-to-date as they work to improve the lives of families.

Measures to Support Families and Parenting in the UK

The Parents Week

4.10 The FPI ran the first Parents Week in 1999. It is a week-long event held annually to celebrate parents and families through events and projects throughout the UK. Besides celebrating parents and families, the parent week also helps to create awareness to encourage taking actions to improve family life. For instance, in the Parents' Week 2013, the Family and Childcare Trust chose the theme 'Make One Change.' It was to encourage childcare professionals to think about the ONE change they could make to improve the quality of family lives, through the work they do.¹⁰

The Parenting Fund

4.11 Entrusted by the Department for Education (formerly the Department for Schools and Families), the FPI managed the Parenting Fund between April 2004 and March 2011 to build and strengthen the work of the voluntary and in community sector with parents and families. Through making grants available to grassroots organizations, the Fund reached

⁷ <http://www.familylives.org.uk/>

⁸ <http://www.familylives.org.uk/about/annual-accounts-and-reports/>

⁹ <http://www.parentinguk.org/about-us/>

¹⁰ <http://www.parenta.com/2013/09/02/national-parents-week-2013-change/>

hundreds of thousands of the UK's most vulnerable parents (like mothers suffering domestic violence, and divorced/single parents) to improve their family support and parenting courses.¹¹

The National Family Week

4.12 The National Family Week was first launched in 2009 to encourage and inspire the British people to champion and cherish family life. It has now firmly established itself as the largest annual celebration of families and positive family values in the UK. The National Family Week is supported by all major political parties, and over 200 national and thousands of not-for-profit organizations, showcasing their work and support of families in their community throughout the country.¹² In addition to being the biggest celebration of family life, it is now an annual event demonstrating community solidarity and social cohesion.

Family Friendly Scheme

4.13 Launched in 2011, the Family Friendly Scheme aims to make the UK a more family friendly society. Public, private, and charity organizations that joins in the scheme are expected to take a 'Family Friendly pledge.' They are then given a framework and resources for putting their family friendly pledge into action. Families are given the opportunity to give feedback, via the scheme's website, on the quality of the service they received from the organizations under the scheme.

Family Friendly Report Cards

4.14 Since 2010, the FPI has produced a "report card" on the UK's progress towards becoming a family friendly society. Essentially, the report card is an annual assessment of how family friendly the UK is in four areas: financial resources, work-life balance, essential services for families and children, and family friendly infrastructure such as housing and childcare. It reports how well the UK is doing as a country to support family life. The grades which the country gets for 2010 and 2011 are C- and D+.¹³ In 2014, it improves to C grade.¹⁴

The Family Test

4.15 Cognizant of the fact that government activities impact on families and families in turn shape how individuals engage with policy initiatives and use public services, the government announced the introduction of a Family Test¹⁵ in August 2014. The objective of the Test is to introduce an explicit family perspective to the policy making process, and to ensure that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning are made explicit and recognized in the process of developing new policy. An evaluation of the Family Test one

¹¹http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/families/familyandparentinginstitute/141058parenting%20fund%202004-2011_summary.pdf

¹² http://www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk/about_us/

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_and_Parenting_Institute

¹⁴ <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/family-friendly-report-card-2014>

¹⁵ www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368894/family-test-guidance.pdf

year after its introduction reviews that the response of government departments to the Family Test has been patchy. It is clear that the Family Test is not, as yet, meeting the government's commitment that it should be applied to all domestic policy.¹⁶

Efforts in Promoting Effectiveness in Parenting Programs

The Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders (2006-2008)

4.16 The Labor governments between 1997 and 2010 recognized that families cannot flourish without the government playing its distinctive role. During its 13 years in power, it actively promoted positive parenting as an essential part of the support provided for parenting. Between 2006 and 2008, it launched the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders^{17, 18} to fund local authorities in England to implement one of three evidence-based parenting programs for parents with children aged 8-13, recommended by the United Nations. These three parenting programs include the Triple-P, Incredible Years (IY), Strengthening Families, and Strengthening Communities (SFSC).

The Parenting Early Intervention Program (2008-2010)

4.17 As a result of the positive findings from the evaluation of the Pathfinder (Lindsay et al., 2008), the British government embarked on a national roll-out of parenting programs for parents of children between ages 8-13 and funded all 150 local authorities in England to deliver the three parenting programs in the Parenting Early Intervention Program (PEIP)¹⁹ between 2008 and 2011. In addition to these three programs, the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) and the Families and Schools Together (FAST) were also included in the PEIP. A brief summary of each of the five PEIP programs are tabulated in the Appendix F.

4.18 The PEIP programs were chosen for implementation in local authorities primarily because they were evidence-based parenting programs with a common aim to improve parent-child relationship, promote children's development, and parental well-being (Cullen et al., 2013). The spectrum of programs included in the PEIP reflects not only a concern for improving parenting knowledge and skills in relation to child management, but an understanding that it is important to empower parents in the schools (FAST) and the communities and (SFSC).

The CANparent Trial

4.19 In 2012, the Coalition government experimented with the CANparent Trial^{20,21,22}

¹⁶ http://www.relate.org.uk/files/relate/implementing_the_family_test.pdf

¹⁷ www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cedar/projects/completed2011/peipprog/interimreportmarch07-copy.pdf

¹⁸ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8614/1/DCSF-RW035.pdf>

¹⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/parenting-early-intervention-programme-evaluation

²⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/canparent-trial-evaluation-first-interim-report

²¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/canparent-trial-evaluation-second-interim-report

²² www.gov.uk/government/publications/canparent-trial-evaluation-final-report

project to develop universal parenting classes to all parents of children aged 0-5. In addition to encourage the development of universal parenting classes, the CANparent Trial attempts to evaluate whether the free provision of parenting classes would provide sufficient incentive to providers to start offering additional parenting classes nationally, including parents beyond the foundation stage. The project also attempts to promote the development of the CANparent quality mark to support parents, commissioners, and purchasers of parenting education.

4.20 Phase 1 (2012-14) of the CANparent trial stimulated 14 providers in the trial areas to offer a wide range of universal parenting classes. However, the number of providers reduced to six, of which only four were active in delivering parenting classes during Phase 2. The number of parents enrolling in Phase 2 was just 164 compared with 2956 during Phase 1. The classes provided in both Phases were effective in improving parents' satisfaction and sense of efficacy with being a parent. Parents who attended the CANparent classes were also overwhelmingly positive about their experience and reported that their classes have led to changes in their own behavior, with positive impact on their children.

Lesson Learned from the United Kingdom

4.21 By and large, it is apparent that the British governments have made a lot of efforts in promoting family values, family friendly policies, and positive parenting as one of the key elements of family support in assuring a good foundation for a child development. These are clearly evident in the range of measures that the British government has introduced in supporting families and parenting in the past couple of decades. As far as parenting support is concerned, the British government has taken a cautious approach in making available parenting programs to the people. It is cautious not to take a direct interventive approach. It restricts itself to establish organizations like the FPI and to provide funding support through these organizations to provide parenting programs to parents and families in need. Besides, it is involved in supporting the identification and introduction of evidence-based parenting programs to help improve parenting as a means to assure good start and development of the children.

Singapore

4.22 By estimation, the number of Singapore Citizens (SCs) aged 65 and above will be tripled to 900,000 by 2030. Assuming the current birth rate remains unchanged in the following decades, it is expected that the population of working-age citizens will drastically decline. Therefore, the Singaporean government has adopted measures to cope with the significant demographic change and one of the measures is introducing immigration. However, taking in immigrants has caused other problems such as tight housing market and transport system congestion. There are also concerns that the hard built social cohesion will be weakened due to conflicts arising from cultural differences and other issues between Singaporeans and foreigners. As a result of the society's concern, the government has tightened the immigration framework and started to look for alternative solutions to the ageing population, including measures to increase the birthrate rate as a key priority in

addressing the population.²³

4.23 However, the high financial and psychological costs of raising children have been a deterrent factor of having children. The Singaporean government sees to it that it plays a vital role in supporting parenting and family, which is the foundation of the Singaporean society. Currently, the government has different policies to support Singaporeans fulfilling their marriage and parenthood aspirations. The government is trying to cultivate a family-friendly environment where parents can get all rounded support from the government, family members, community and coworkers. Working with community and different social service partners, government strives to support individuals and families through various social policies and effective initiatives that target their needs. Meanwhile, different policies are being implemented in Singapore, aiming to bring Singaporeans assurance and confidence in starting larger families.²⁴

Key Operators of Family and Parenting Support in Singapore

4.24 In Singapore, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)²⁵ is responsible for supporting families and parenting. The mission of MSF is to nurture a resilient and caring society that can conquer challenges together. Families are basic social units of the community. Hence, MSF works with different government departments and social service partners to provide services that promote and strengthen family values. For instance, it works the Ministry of Education to make family and parenting programs and resources more accessible to parents through the schools of their children

4.25 Another government ministry which is heavily involved in fostering family development is the Ministry of Manpower (MOM). As a government ministry, the MOM is responsible for issues related to workforce and workplace.²⁶ However, like other places in the world, the actual and potential conflicts between work and family need to be carefully addressed to ensure healthy family development. To this end, MOM has enforced different kinds of leave that brings convenience and flexibility to parents, aiming to enhance the quality of parenting and family time, as well as to strike a good balance between work and family.

4.26 In addition to government ministries, the government also set up a number of public bodies which work has directly and indirectly supported families and parenting in Singapore. For instance, the MSF set up the Families for Life²⁷ as a council to promote family resilience by providing a platform for communication between the government and the Singapore community. Families for Life provide a wide variety of information to citizens,

²³ <http://population.sg/introduction/#.VvuHEtJ94sY>

²⁴ <http://population.sg/introduction/#.VvuHEtJ94sY>

²⁵ <http://app.msf.gov.sg/>

²⁶ <http://www.mom.gov.sg/>

²⁷ <http://app.msf.gov.sg/About-MSF/Our-Organisation/Statutory-Boards-Councils/Councils-under-MSF/Families-for-Life>; <https://www.familiesforlife.sg/Pages/default.aspx>)

ranging from parenting information to upcoming events suitable for families. The council also encourages ideas that strengthen family values such as work-life balance and quality family time.

4.27 Besides the Families for Life, the Housing and Development Board (HDB)²⁸ is also a public housing authority whose policies have implications for families and parenting in Singapore. The HDB has different schemes to assist families to purchase public housing. For instance, the Parenthood Priority Scheme (PPS) sets aside certain percentage of public housing flats for first-timer families with at least 1 child who is a Singapore Citizen under 16. Before the new flats are completed, these first-timer married couples with Singapore Citizen children under 16 could also get temporary housing under the Parenthood Provision Housing Scheme (PPHS). Besides, the Multi-Generation Priority Scheme (MGPS) introduced in March 2012 gives priority allocation to parents and their married children who submit a joint application to buy public housing flats under certain conditions.²⁹

4.28 People's Association (PA)³⁰ is a statutory board established by government to promote a harmonious and socially cohesive society. It acts as a bridge for connection of communities and the government. The board partners with other non-government organizations and community clubs to enhance a friendly environment and reinforce family values in the society. The PA actively promotes health family life and relationships in Singapore. In 2005, it started the Family Life Champion program to promote community support for family formation and celebrate family life. Its 87 Family Life Champions contribute to strengthen family life through disseminating resources in support of parenting and couple hood, including FLC "FAM-Tastic Toolkit" and the Professional Resources including parenting, child development and health, and couples wellness.³¹

4.29 Apart from government departments and public bodies, family and parenting support in Singapore are also provided by the non-government organizations. It is important to provide an exhaustive list of these NGOs in this report. However, some of the more prominent NGOs include the Centre for Fathering (CFF)³², I Love Children (ILC),³³ Fei Yue Family Service Centre and Community Services (Fei Yue)³⁴, Blossom World Society³⁵, and the Reach Community Services Society.³⁶

²⁸ <http://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/homepage>

²⁹ <http://www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/residential/buying-a-flat/new/eligibility/priority-schemes>

³⁰ <https://www.pa.gov.sg/>

³¹ https://www.pa.gov.sg/Our_Programmes/Family

³² <http://fathers.com.sg/>

³³ <https://ilovechildren.sg/>

³⁴ <http://www.fycc.org/>

³⁵ <http://www.blossomworld.sg/>

³⁶ <http://www.reach.org.sg/>

4.30 CFF is a non-funded organization that has been established for more than 10 years. It believes that the involvement of father is very important in a child's development and the core belief of the organization is to empower father to be a role model of the child. CFF has organized different activities to achieve her mission, including workshop, seminar and adventure camp.

4.31 ILC was set up in 2005 as a non-profit organization which focuses on the fertility of Singaporean. The organization believes that child is the key to happiness for all married couples and supports the idea of early parenthood. ILC provides a platform for Singaporeans to share their stories related to parenthood. It also acts as a bridge between professionals (e.g. doctor) and Singaporeans so citizens can receive proper advice regarding their parenthood issues.

4.32 Fei Yue is a non-profit welfare organization that aims to provide quality social services including counseling, outreach and child protection services. The aim of the organization is to cater the needs of people from all walks of life. In particular, Fei Yue is committed to serving people in need and she believes that promotion of social development can advocate a stronger family tie.

4.33 Blossom World Society is a charitable organization that focuses on volunteerism and service learning. It believes moral values and sense of gratitude are vital foundation of a harmonious society. In particular, the organization has put a lot of effort in promoting the importance of family bonding. Different kinds of activities have been organized to reinforce family values such as Family Reunion Day and Blossom Parents' Day.

4.34 Reach Community Services Society is a charitable organization that aims to help distressed family. The center helps Singaporeans to overcome different life changes by providing a wide range of services including family, counseling, youth and senior services. Regarding family support, Reach Community Services Society provides marital counseling and workshop for marriage preparation.

Family and Parenting Support Measures in Singapore

Jubilee Marriage & Parenthood Package

4.35 The Jubilee Marriage & Parenthood Package (M&P)³⁷ encourages families to give birth to more children and improves support provided to families. Under the Marriage and Parenthood Package (M&P), there are different measures that offer extra support to families in different stages of the family development.

4.36 To facilitate family formation, the government established the Social Development Network (SDN) to facilitate social interaction among single citizens.³⁸ It provides a

³⁷ <http://population.sg/resources/summary-marriage-parenthood-measures/#.VvtnX9J94sZ>

³⁸ <https://app.sdn.sg/default.aspx>

network of single people, resources, and partners to both private and public sectors to create an environment for single Singaporeans to meet and start meaningful relationships. When the young couple has formed a family, the HDB offers assistance to first-time applicants in purchasing HDB Build-to-Order flats through the Housing Scheme for Priority. Young couples can also apply for Central Provident Fund (CPF) Housing Grants (such as the Family Grant and the Additional CPF Housing Grant) to help them finance the purchase of public housing.

4.37 To encourage parenthood, there is a package of measures to support couple having children. This includes the Medisave Maternity Package, which helps couples to pay for the delivery and pre-delivery expenses. For couples who have problem conceiving a baby, they could apply for government co-funding under the Enhanced Co-funding for Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART) received at the public hospitals. The scheme covers up to 75% of the cost.³⁹ Besides, up to \$6,000, \$5,000 and \$4,000 (in SGD) can be used from couples' Medisave for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd time that Medisave is used for assisted conception procedures.

4.38 Raising children nowadays is costly. To help reduce financial cost of raising and caring for Children, the government had made available different kinds of subsidies and allowances to the Singaporeans. These include the follows:

Baby Bonus:

- Government provides help to defray out-of-pocket child-raising costs for parents. The Baby bonus will be disbursed after the child's birth.

Parenthood Tax Rebate (PTR):

- Parents can claim the PTR of \$5,000 (in SGD) for their 1st child, \$10,000 (in SGD) for their 2nd child, and \$20,000 (in SGD) per child for all subsequent children.

Qualifying / Handicapped Child Relief (QCR/HCR):

- Parents can claim \$4,000 (in SGD) per child under the QCR or \$5,500 (in SGD) per child under the HCR.

Working Mother's Child relief (WMCR):

- Working mothers can claim the WMCR at 15% of earned income for their 1st child, 20% for their 2nd and 25% per child for all subsequent children.

Grandparent Caregiver Relief (GCR):

- Working mothers whose children aged 12 and below are cared for by their grandparents can claim the GCR of \$3,000 (in SGD).

³⁹ <http://www.ecitizen.gov.sg/Topics/Pages/Government-Co-Funding-for-Assisted-Reproduction.aspx>

Subsidies for center based infant care & child care:

- Parents can enjoy a monthly subsidy of up to \$600 (in SGD) and up to \$300 (in SGD) for infant care and childcare respectively.

Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Concession:

- Parents can enjoy a \$95 (in SGD) levy concession if they have a young child aged below 12 staying with them.

Work-Life Support

4.39 The government has implemented the Pro-Family Leave Schemes which aims to nurture pro-family environment in Singapore. It provides support in getting married, having and raising children. The scheme is under the Ministry of Manpower. To facilitate the application of leaves, the government has developed a Government-Paid Leave Portal which is an online application platform for the Government-Paid Leave (GPL) Schemes. The application portal offers a user-friendly, seamless and consistent application experience where GPL claims can be facilitated. The types of leave include:

Government-Paid Maternity Leave (GPML)

- Working mothers are entitled to 16 weeks of Government-Paid Maternity Leave (GPML) to recover from childbirth and care for newborns who are Singapore Citizens.

Government-Paid Maternity Benefit (GPMB)

- It supports working mothers who do not qualify for Government-Paid Maternity Leave (GPML). This scheme benefits shorter-term workers who have been in employment for at least 90 days in the 12 months immediately before the birth of their child.

Government-Paid Paternity Leave (GPPL)

- To encourage and support shared parental responsibility, working fathers are entitled to 1 week of GPPL. This scheme supports fathers in caring for and bonding with their newborns. In addition to the 1 week of mandatory paternity leave, the employer can voluntarily grant up to 1 additional week of paternity leave to fathers whose child was born on or after 1 January 2015.

Government-Paid Shared Parental Leave (SPL)

- In addition to GPPL, working fathers are able to share 1 week of the 16 weeks of their spouse's maternity leave, subject to their spouse's agreement.

Infant Care Leave

- Both parents may take 6 days of unpaid infant care leave per year if they have any child aged below 2 years.

Government-Paid Childcare Leave (GPCL)

- It aims to enable working parents to spend quality time with their children and care for them. Under this scheme, parents with young children can take up to 6 days of paid childcare leave each year until their child turns 7 years old, while parents with older children aged 7 to 12 can take up to 2 days of paid childcare leave.

Work-Life Grant ⁴⁰

4.40 The aim of the Work-Life Grant is to enhance a pro-family environment in Singapore by helping employers to develop a pro-family workplace so that employees can gain a better balance between work and family. The Work-Life Grant consists of 2 main components:

The Developmental Grant:

- The Developmental Grant is a one-time grant of up to \$40,000 (in SGD) per company to help work place to take steps towards implementing work-life strategies, particularly FWAs. It can also help to defray part of the developmental costs, e.g. for training, consultancy and infrastructure.

The Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) Incentive:

- The FWA Incentive encourages companies to support more employees on FWAs and to provide and sustain work-life friendly workplaces.

Promoting Family Values

4.41 Promotion of parenting and family education is one of the key efforts of the government to make Singapore the best place for families. For this purpose, the MSF works in partnership with the businesses, employers, schools and community to create a pro-family environment through instilling positive values and shaping mindset towards family, marriage and parenthood on the one hand and informing, educating, empowering individuals through their life journey to form and build strong families on the other through a multi-sector effort called “Family Matters!”. As a movement to promote parenting and family life education, “Family Matters!” consists of the following measures:

FamilyMatters@Business

4.42 This includes giving financial support via the *FamilyMatters@Business* Grant to help eligible businesses adopt and implement practices that welcome families, encouraging businesses to become family-friendly by signing the Business for Families Pledge, and giving the Business for Families Mark to businesses which meet specific standards.

FamilyMatters@Community

⁴⁰ <http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/good-work-practices/work-life-grant>

4.43 Service providers on the *FamilyMatters@Community* list can apply for funding to offer a variety of parenting and family education programs which seek to empower individuals and families with knowledge and skills to enrich and strengthening their family life and promote positive mindsets and attitudes towards family. Programs supported by MSF under the *FamilyMatters@Community* scheme should meet the following criteria: (a) skills-based; (b) informed by evidence, research or best practices; (c) 4 hours & above; and (d) cover topics on marriage, parenting, family relationships or managing multiple roles in.

FamilyMatters@School

4.44 The *FamilyMatters@School* Programs offers a comprehensive list of programs and their respective service providers on a wide range of parenting and family topics. These parenting and family program are provided by trained family life educators and professionals. By working closely with schools, parent support groups and parent volunteers, the MSF ensures that parents can easily access family education programs that help them better connect with their children. The MSF updates the list of programs and their respective service provides every year to make sure that the parenting and family education programs meet the emerging needs of the families.

Family and Parenting Education

4.45 In order to reduce parenting stresses, to encourage positive child behavior, to support parents and give them skills and confidence to raise and nurture their children, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is working with the Education Ministry to make parenting programs and resources more accessible to parents through their children's schools using the School Family Education Program (SFP). The two evidence-based programs specifically brought to parents through the schools are:

Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P)^{41, 42}

4.46 The program was introduced in Singapore by MSF in 2001. Starting from 2005, the ministry cooperates with different community agencies, such as MCYS Community Services Society and Daybreak Family Service Centre, to offer the Standard and Pathways Triple P to Singaporeans. Triple P practitioners can also be found at Changi General Hospital and Khoo Teck Puat Hospital. The program is designed to provide stronger support for parents who wish to improve their children's behaviors and eventually reduce parenting stress. Over 35 years of research have been done on Triple P. Its effectiveness has been evaluated in more than 150 clinical studies that it brings positive child and parent outcomes worldwide.

Signposts^{43, 44}

⁴¹ <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Press-Room/Speech-at-the-FamilyMattersSchool>

⁴² http://www.cgh.com.sg/ims/ims_medical_specialities/pages/psychological.aspx

⁴³ <http://www.kkh.com.sg/AboutUs/PressRelease/Pages/01-03-2011.aspx>

⁴⁴ <http://prc.webberoo.com.au/index.php/creating-knowledge/parenting-children-with-complex-needs/signposts-in-singapore>

4.47 Signposts program aims to educate and empower parents to manage difficult child behaviors. The program is jointly provided by KK Women's and Children's Hospital's Department of Child Development (KKH DCD) and Parenting Research Centre (PRC), Australia, National Council of Social Service (NCSS), and Temasek Cares. The pilot plans to serve up to 1,000 parents and caregivers in the first year, and 1,500 families over the complete 3-year period. It is an evidence based program that teaches caregivers skills for effective management of child's difficult behaviors. The preliminary results have shown that the program is effective in reducing parental stress and boosting parental confidence. Children have also demonstrated more compliance and less disruptive behaviors.

Lessons Learned from Singapore

4.48 It can be seen that family and social development is one of the key priorities in Singapore. In the last couples of decades, the government, in collaboration with the public bodies, NGOs, businesses and the community, has been instituting a lot of measures to support the families. Among these, a lot of efforts have been focused on helping businesses to adopt family-friendly practices. The government also introduced different kinds of family and parent leave schemes to support family and parenting. The core of family support is parenting assistance. To this end, the government also promotes positive and effective parenting practice through funding and making available, parenting programs which are rigorous, robust, and evidence-based to the parents. Parenting and family supports in Singapore are geared towards family and social development which is vital for national development. Therefore, the role of the government in family and parenting support is very positive.

Taiwan

4.49 Traditional Chinese societies put a lot of emphasis on family values which are considered as the core of traditional Chinese culture. In Taiwan, the government still views family as a vital component of a nation and believes that the family has great impact on individual's personal growth and stability of society. However, Taiwan has experienced tremendous change in society and population structure in the past few decades. Families nowadays are facing⁴⁵ different challenges such as ageing population, decreasing fertility rate, increasing divorce rate and working parents. The government believes that it is responsible for the provision proper support families. Therefore, government has adopted different measures hoping to strengthen family values again. In particular, a lot of measures are focused on parenting education.

Legal Framework

4.50 The determination of Taiwan governments to support family and parenting is evident in their legislative efforts which make not only the government, but also different sectors of the community responsible for assuring that families are properly supported. In fact,

⁴⁵ <http://www.edu.tw/>

Taiwan is the first place in Asia to develop a comprehensive legal framework for the provision of family education. In addition to the *Family Education Law* of 2003, there are also a number of related laws which stipulate the provision of family and parenting education in different circumstances

Law Relating to Family Support

4.51 Taken together, the *Labor Standards Act*, the *Labor Pension Act*, *Gender Equality in Employment Act*, *Regulations on Leave-Taking of Workers* provide a package of provisions and measures which are conducive to family formation, child birth and rearing, and as well as family adaptability during critical family incidents like death of a family member.

4.52 Besides, the *Public Assistance Act* (社會救助法)⁴⁶ covers issue related to family support for low-income and middle-income households to ensure they have a proper living environment. The authorities are expected to provide special assistance and services including infant nutrition subsidy, education subsidy, nursing subsidy, procreation subsidy and home care services.

4.53 Other than the Public Assistance Act, there is also the Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (特殊境遇家庭扶助條例)⁴⁷. This Act offers different kinds of assistance, such as children education, children living and children nursery assistance, to families suffering from hardship with a view to helping them stand on their own feet and improve their living environment.

Laws on Family and Parent Education

Family Education Act (家庭教育法)⁴⁸

5.54 This law was enacted in 2003 for the purposes of promoting family life knowledge, facilitating physical and mental development of the public, building happy families, and creating a peaceful society. Article 2 of the law defines the scope of family education clearly to include parenting education. Articles 4 and 5 stipulate the role of and responsibilities of the central and local governments for family education. Generally speaking, the central government is responsible for the legislation, research and development, planning and promotion of family education territory-wide in Taiwan, whereas the local governments for the planning, implementing, and monitoring of family education at the local levels.

4.55 Under the *Family Education Act*, the government is required to set up Family Education Centers and arrange different activities related to family education. All senior high schools and below are also required to provide at least 4 hours of the family education courses per year (Article 12). At the same time, the law also empowers the schools personnel to notify and organize family education parents or guardians of students who have shown deviant behavior or involved in disciplinary event (Article 15). Besides, in accordance with

⁴⁶ <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/LawClass/LawContent.aspx?PCODE=D0050078>

⁴⁷ <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/LawClass/LawContent.aspx?PCODE=D0050075>

⁴⁸ <http://edu.law.moe.gov.tw/EngLawContent.aspx?Type=E&id=183>

Article 14, local government authority in charge of education is required to provide men and women eligible for marriage with no less than 4 hours of pre-marital education.

Regulations for the Training and Certification of Family Educators ⁴⁹

4.56 This regulation was enacted in accordance with the Family Education Act to provide clear operational details to set up a certification system of family educators. Basically, this regulation lays down the curriculum requirements for the family educators training programs in Taiwan in order for graduates of these programs to be recognized as certified family educators in Taiwan. Upon successfully completing training programs, which meet the curriculum requirement laid down in the regulation, graduates can apply to the Ministry of Education for being a certified family educator. In Taiwan, only certified family educators can be employed to discharge professional family education services.

Children and Youth Welfare Act (兒童及青少年福利法) ⁵⁰

4.57 The Children and Youth Welfare Act has been passed to ensure the interests and rights of children and youth are protected. One of the ways to ensure the welfare of these children and young people is to make sure that they are under the proper care of the parents or guardians. Under the Act, municipal and county governments are encouraged to assist civilian groups in providing different services to children and their families. It includes counseling services, parental education and after school child care service. Specifically, according to Article 65 of the Act, local governments may mandate the parents or guardians who have rendered the welfare of children and juvenile under their care at risk to take more than eight (8) and less than fifty (50) hours of parental education and counseling. Failure of the parents to attend the parent education programs as required is punishable by fines.

Juvenile Delinquency Act (少年事件處理法) ⁵¹

4.58 In support of the compulsory parenting course suggested by Family Education Act, Article 84 of Juvenile Delinquency Act has clearly stated that parents of juvenile delinquents can be required to attend a parenting course for 8 – 50 hours for failing to nurture the juvenile and causing the latter to violate the criminal laws or have the potential to violate the criminal laws. If the parents refuse to partake in the parenting course or does not complete the hours, the juvenile court may sentence a fine. If he/she rejects to take the course after receiving a second notice, the court may carry the fine on a recurring basis until the parties concerned take the course. Once the fine is imposed for more than 3 successive times, the court may publicly announce the name of the statutory agent or guardian by ruling.

Key Operators of Family Support

⁴⁹ The Chinese Name of this Regulation is “家庭教育專業人員資格遴聘及培訓辦法” and is available from : https://www.moefes.moe.gov.tw/law_FEA_Qualifications.aspx

⁵⁰ <http://glrs.moi.gov.tw/EngLawContent.aspx?Type=E&id=17>

⁵¹ <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?PCode=C0010011>

4.59 The Social and Family Affairs Administration under the Ministry of Health and Welfare is responsible for policy planning regarding women, children, disabled, senior citizens and family affairs. In formulating family policy, the SFAA adheres to key principles, namely, respecting family value, strengthening family function and responding to family needs. With the principles in mind, the policy includes the areas of family care and support, economic security, gender equality, family relation and residential security. As far as family support and parent education are concerned, the organization has created a website called Website on Baby Nursing and Parenting (育兒親職網).⁵³ The website offers different kinds of information related to parenting, such as fatherhood, child care and parent-child interaction. The information is accessible online and citizens can easily find the information they are looking for. Through the website, people can get advice on developing a healthy relationship with their children.

Bureau of Labor Insurance, Ministry of Labor

4.60 The Bureau of Labor Insurance is a governmental organization under the Ministry of Labor, and it is responsible for protection and regulation of services related to labor and other related laws. The main law governing labor protection in Taiwan is the *Labor Standards Act*. Other relevant laws include the *Labor Pension Act*, *Gender Equality in Employment Act*, and *Regulations on Leave-Taking of Workers*. Taking these laws and regulation together, the Bureau of Labor Insurance hopes to address a better balance between work and the family so as to assure a better environment and culture conducive to positive family development.

Measures to Address Work-family Conflicts and to Develop a Pro-family Environment

4.61 Legal provisions to address supporting parenting and family development in Taiwan are provided by *Labor Standards Act* and the *Gender Equality in Employment Act*. These laws and regulations put together, provide a package of measures including maximum work hours and leave arrangement which are more conducive to family development.

Maximum Working Hours

4.62 Article 30 of the *Labor Standards Act* provides that the working time of workers may not exceed eight hours a day or 40 hours a week. Employers may, based on the needs of workers and their family members, allow workers the flexibility to adjust their starting and finishing work time of up to one hour of the daily regular working hours.⁵⁴

Marriage Leave

4.63 According to Article 43 of the *Labor Standards Act*, a worker may leave and take time off for wedding and other family reasons. The duration of marriage leave is specified in

⁵² <http://www.sfaa.gov.tw/SFAA/Eng/Default.aspx>

⁵³ <http://babyedu.sfaa.gov.tw/mooc/index.php>

⁵⁴ <http://laws.mol.gov.tw/Eng/FLAW/FLAWDAT0201.asp>

Article 2 of the Regulation of Leaving-taking. Currently, a worker is entitled to eight days of wedding leave with full pay.⁵⁵

Maternity Leave

4.64 To support parenting, a female employment may claim to receive maternity benefits, such as maternity leave and subsidy. In accordance with Article 50 of the *Labor Standards Act*, female employees may cease work and be given eight weeks of maternity leave before and after her delivery. If a female worker has been employed for more than six months, she is entitled to full-pay maternity leave. If her period of service is less than six months, she is still entitled to half-pay maternity leave.

Paternity Leave

4.65 According to Article 15 of the *Gender Equality in Employment Act*, a male employee is entitled to five days paid paternity leave when his spouse gives birth to a baby. This 5-day paternity leave can be combined with two weekends to form a 9-day leave for a male worker to stay with their spouses and take care of the baby.

Parental Leave

4.66 According to Article 16 of *Gender Equality in Employment Act*, employers with more than thirty employees are required to provide unpaid parental leave to employees who have worked with the company for one year and have children under age three. This leave can be continued until the child reaches age three, but may not exceed a total of two years. Employers are not obliged to pay wages to employees during the period of unpaid parental leave. However, according to the EIA, employees can apply for the allowance for parental leave.

Key Operators of Family and Parent Education

Ministry of Education

4.67 Based on the *Family Education Act*, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for all issues related to education, including family and parenting education. At the central government level, it is responsible for the national policy and planning of family and parenting education. The local government will be responsible for the planning and implementation of family education and parenting education at the local level in accordance with the policy and framework set by the central government. The MOE implements family and parenting education mostly through the schools and the family education centers.

4.68 The MOE is also responsible for establishing and maintaining a Certification System for Family Educators. Upon the enactment of the Family Education Act in 2003, the government promulgated the Regulations for the Training and Certification of Family

⁵⁵ <http://laws.mol.gov.tw/eng/EngContent.asp?MsgID=35>

Educators in 2004.⁵⁶ The next year, the Ministry of Education authorized the Taiwan Council on Family Life Education to establish certification guidelines and criteria for the profession.⁵⁷ Currently, a certification system for people working in the field of family education is established. Workers can apply for assessment of their qualification on MOE's website. The establishment of a framework helps to ensure quality of services provided and facilitate further training.

Universities and Tertiary Institutes - Family Education Research and Development

4.69 Research and development is important in evolving relevant and effective family education services to people in Taiwan. In this regard, the MOE has taken an active role in promoting research on family education. In 1999, it set up family education research centers in three universities to conduct research studies and provide support to family education in Taiwan. In the past years, research on family education has been moving from foundational theoretical debates to effectiveness studies. Currently, universities with a research center on family education include:

- National Taiwan Normal University Family Research and Development Centre⁵⁸
- Family Education Research Centre, National Chiayi University⁵⁹
- Healthy Family Research Center, National Open University⁶⁰
- Family Education Research Center, National Chi Nan University⁶¹

Family Education Advisory Councils

4.70 Family Education Advisory Councils (家庭教育諮詢委員會) was established in accordance with Article 6 of the Family Education Act to enable the government to solicit the participation of the scholars, experts, and representatives of the governmental and non-governmental organization in advising changes and policies regarding family education, development of strategies and plans on family education, and supervise and coordinate the implementation of family education activities.

Family Education Centers

4.71 Family education centers are established in all counties/cities to join forces with educational, cultural, health, social administration, household administration, labor, and news organizations and units to promote local family education affairs. The major responsibility of Family Education Centers is to provide the range of family education specified in the *Family Education Act* of 2003 through qualified family education professionals. Core family

⁵⁶ <http://law.moj.gov.tw/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?PCode=H0080066>

⁵⁷ Hwang, S.H. (2014). Family Policies in Taiwan: Development, Implementation, and Assessment. In Mihaela Robila (Ed) *Handbook of Family Policies Across the Globe* (pp.273-288). New York: Springer.

⁵⁸ <http://www.cfe.ntnu.edu.tw/Page.aspx?CDE=PGE1010>

⁵⁹ <http://www.ncyu.edu.tw/fec/index.aspx>

⁶⁰ <http://hf.nou.edu.tw/>

⁶¹ <http://www.ncnu.edu.tw/ncnuweb/home.aspx?unitId=s000>

education programs provided by the family education centers include parent education, children education, gender education, marital education, family education, and family resources management education.

Schools

4.72 Article 8 of the *Family Education Act* specifies schools as one of the institutions through which family education is provided. As an important context to promote and implement family education, not only schools play an important role in imparting family values in the students. It is also a convenient place to reach out for parents and to provide different kinds of parent education to them. Therefore, in addition to cultivating family values to the students through formal and informal curricula, many schools organized parent education seminars, parents groups, parents reading clubs, and parent-child reading clubs as part of the measures to promote steady improvement in education.⁶²

NGOs

4.73 There are a number of NGOs which are involved in the providing parenting programs in Taiwan. For instance, the Taipei City Parenting Education Association originally established in 1998 is among one of these NGOs. It works with schools and other bodies to provide various activities that are related to family education. Seminar, workshop and talks are held at a regular basis to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of harmonious families. The organization also offers parenting training courses and counseling service, so that parents can gain a better understanding of parenting and get the help they need.⁶³

Other Institutions Providing Family Education

4.74 In addition to family education centers and schools, Article 8 of the *Family Education Act* lists a number of institutions which are responsible for providing family education to the Taiwanese. These include all adult education institutions, mass media, and all other public and private institutions and organizations related to family education. In effect, this is more or less the same to make the provision of family education a collective responsibility of all those who are working in different ways with the families

Key Family and Parent Education Programs

4.75 Family and parent education is organized within the family life development cycle framework and provided to people in different stages of their family development. Three main types of family and parent education programs are provided by the MOE in accordance with the *Family Education Act*. They are pre-marital and marital education, parent education and filial education.

Pre-marital and Marital Education

⁶² https://stats.moe.gov.tw/files/ebook/Education_in_Taiwan/2013-2014_Education_in_Taiwan.pdf

⁶³ http://www.parenting.org.tw/?page_id=2

4.76 Article 14 of the *Family Education Act* requires Municipal and County government authorities in charge of education administration to provide men and women intending to get married with at least 4 hours pre-marital family education. These courses are mostly delivered through small groups or talks/seminars in municipal or county family education centers or by the NGOs. Pre-marital education programs are often linked with other stages of family development in preparing couples for happy family life. For instance, the Kaosiong Family Education Centre delivered a series of talks around building the so-called 3H-Families (Healthy, Happy and Harmonious Families). The first of this talk series is on “Courtship, love, and marriage”, followed by “The Aesthetics of Encountering Happy Families”, and then “Stages of Family Development”

4.77 In 2010, the MOE also implemented a national campaign called “Healthy Family Begins with Marriage”. The campaign aims to stabilize marriage relationship and improve marital quality in order to lay a good foundation for a quality child rearing, through promotion of positive family values. The campaign hopes to enhance people’s awareness of their marriage expectation and help build a positive attitude towards marriage through promotion and publicity in the media, as well as through learning activities and provisions of recourses. It is also hoped to encourage couples to learn from each other, equip effective communication and problem-solving abilities, hence respect each other and have a better marriage relationship and subsequently a healthy family.

Parent Education

4.78 The government is responsible for providing parent education programs directed at parents whose children are at risk of running wayward. This is spurred by Article 15 of the *Family Education Act* which provides a legal basis for the government to require parents of these at-risk children to receive compulsory guidance and education in parenting by certified family educators at family education centers or by those attached to the juvenile courts. Parent education of this nature is mostly on an individual family guidance basis. For instance, the MOE initiated the trial project "Individual Family Guidance Program" in 2007.⁶⁴ Ever since, a network of family education centers across Taiwan has been actively guiding families to do their part and give assistance to even more children in need.

4.79 Besides, through its family education centers, the MOE also provides a range of education to parents at different stages of their family development. The Kaohsiung Family Education is a case in point.⁶⁵ In addition to "Individual Family Guidance Program" (個別化親職教育) targeted at parents whose children are mostly in need of care and attention, it also provides parent education to help parents to understand and rear up children in different stages of development. Besides, as attempt to echo the call to develop learning families, it also offers parent education programs to encourage parents and their children to read and

⁶⁴ <http://english.moe.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=14726&ctNode=11435&mp=11>

⁶⁵

<http://ks.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/SubSites/Pages/Detail.aspx?site=2963aef4-cd1f-4ed2-a6d8-bc525f4bde19&nodeid=445&pid=6143>

learn together (親子/家庭共學活動).

4.80 Some NGOs have developed their own signature parenting programs. The Taipei City Parenting Education Association (台北市親職教育協會), for instance, is actively providing parent education and training through their Effective Parenting Training Program (父母效能系統訓練實務). The program is based on the assumption that children make mistakes because of their misinterpretation of the situation and children will learn from their mistakes and correct themselves. Thus, it is important to help parents know the cause of their children's behaviors, to change their own instead of their children's behaviors, and develop a positive parent-child relationship conducive to both children and parents' learning.⁶⁶

Filial Education

4.81 Similar to marriage and parent education, provision of filial education is an important responsibility of the family education centers. According to Article 2 of the *Family Education Act*, filial education is a kind of family education that is promoted in Taiwan. The purpose of filial education is to strengthen students and young people's sense of filial piety towards their parents and grandparents in the family, as well as fostering their respect for the elderly people in the community. Filial education also aims at developing young people's awareness of the concept of reverence for their ancestors.

4.82 As other countries worldwide, there are Mother and Father's Days to celebrate the contributions of parents for their children. The MOE also initiated national campaign to promote young people's respect for their grandparents. In 2010, it designated the last Sunday of every August to be the Grandparents' Day (祖父母節), which is intended to help children and young people understand the importance of family relationship and to enhance mutual respect and interaction between grandparents and grandchildren.

Web-based and Online Materials

4.83 The government is very active in producing web-based and online family education materials for people and families of different needs and background. These web-based and online family education materials aim to inculcate positive family values and knowledge for well-functioning families. They are posted on the websites of the relevant government bureaus/departments and are available for use by anybody free of charge. The two websites which contains the largest number of self-learning materials are the Website of Baby Nursing and Parenting (育兒親職網) and the Website of Family Education (家庭教育網).

Website on Baby Nursing and Parenting (育兒親職網)

4.84 This website was developed and maintained by the Social and Family Affairs Administration under the Ministry of Health and Welfare.⁶⁷ The website provides video clips, printed text materials, and interactive online materials for use of new parents and those with

⁶⁶ <http://www.parenting.org.tw/?p=181>

⁶⁷ <http://babyedu.sfaa.gov.tw/mooc/index.php>

young children. Themes of these materials include new parents, child development, child safety, child care, and parent-child interaction.

Family Education Website (家庭教育網)

4.85 This Family Education Website⁶⁸ was developed and published by the Director of Lifelong Education under the Ministry of Education (教育部終身教育司). The following four areas of materials are directly related to family education:

- Parent education (16 guide books for parents of different ages of children and parents of different backgrounds have been published between 2014 and now)⁶⁹
- Marriage education (11 guide books for parents of different ages of children and parents of different backgrounds have been published between 2014 and now)⁷⁰
- Family resources management education (2 guidebooks were published in 2014)⁷¹
- Family education (3 course packs for family educators and 1 electronic bulletin were published between 2014 and now)⁷²

Lessons Learned from Taiwan

4.86 Taiwan government has played a significant role in creating a family friendly society favorable to family formation and development. Besides, it has been very determined in making parent and family education available to its people in different stages of the family life cycle. This effort is evident in the enactment of the Family Education Act in 2003. As the preamble of the Act reveals, the government sees the importance of family education in building happy families and in creating a peaceful society. With this understanding, the government is actively involved in specifying the training requirements of the family educators and their certification because training is crucial to assure the quality of family educators and the services they provide to the people. Through the MOE, the government is making efforts to make family a lifelong learning institution to cope with the challenges it faces in different stages of its development and different situations it is confronted with. Therefore, besides making family education mandatory to certain groups of parents and families, it is also concerned with providing family education to all families at large. Obviously, this huge need for family education cannot be met without people and families themselves making some efforts. The government has produced a lot of guide books for use by people and family educators to meet their huge demands.

South Korea

⁶⁸ <https://moe.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/Default.aspx>

⁶⁹ <https://moe.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=352>

⁷⁰ <https://moe.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=349>

⁷¹ <https://moe.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=346&pid=523>

⁷² <https://moe.familyedu.moe.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=344>

4.87 Like Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, South Korea has been undergoing rapid Westernization in the past decades. Despite western influences, many traditions pertaining to marriage and family life still exist. Filial piety (*hyo* in Korean), the second of the Five Relationships according to Mencius, has traditionally been the normative foundation of Korean family life. Respect for senior family members is still considered to be a family virtue. On the other hand, with universal obligatory education and industrialization, female family members are receiving more education nowadays and are more financially capable. Male supremacy is now challenged by an urge to make the traditional family more democratic. Family and family relationships are becoming more unstable now than ever. In the midst of these challenges, the government has been making substantial efforts through family support as well as family and parent education to keep the virtues of the traditional family and to help them face the challenges of modernization.

Legal Framework and Responsible Government Bodies

4.88 The challenges presented to the South Korean governments have been manifold. In addition to preserving virtues of the traditional family, they are also confronted with problems posted by the encroachment of family life as a result of the long hours of work and employment. With declining fertility and birth rates, the Korean family is also at risk. Hence, the Korean governments had enacted a number of laws which assign legal responsibilities to the relevant government bureaux and departments to take measures to safeguard families and family life in the country. The important aspects of these laws are as follows:

Framework Act on Healthy Homes

4.89 The *Framework Act on Healthy Homes* was first enacted in 2004. Its aim is to help build healthy homes by specifying the rights and duties of the people as well as the responsibilities of the government with respect to healthy home life and the maintenance and development of families. The fundamental principle of the law is to maintain and develop a home, so that it can satisfy the needs of its members and contribute to social integration (Article 2). An explicit aim of the law is that every party should endeavor to prevent the dissolution of the family (Article 9).

4.90 The Act specifies the establishment of a Central Healthy Home Policy Committee under the Prime Minister to deliberate, among others, on matters concerning the establishment and implementation of a Master Plan for Healthy Homes (Article 13). Based on deliberation of the Central Healthy Home Policy Committee, the Minister for Gender Equality and Family shall establish a Master Plan for Health Homes every five year to strengthen family functions and develop home potentials, as well as to find measure to support families to prevent their dissolution (Article 15)

4.91 Upon receipt of The Master Plan for Healthy Homes worked out by the Minister for Gender Equality and Family in consultation with other central government departments, local governments shall establish an implementation plan for healthy homes that and carry out tasks contained in it. It is the responsibility of the local governments to evaluate their

implementation plans and report their performance to the Minister of Gender Equality and Family annually (Articles 16 and 17).

4.92 The Act also specifies a number of services and assistance to be provided by the government in order to maintain and develop healthy homes in the country. Among others, these measures include child care and after school services for bringing up children (Article 22), measures to promote the health of family members according to their life cycle such as babyhood and infancy, childhood, youth, middle, and old age (Article 25). The government also has a responsibility to provide support and facilities to ease the burden of families to take care of family members who are young, old, weak, or sick (Article 25).

4.93 The Act specifies an explicit role of the government to promote democratic and gender equal family relationship through family life education parent education, family counseling, and publicity on family equality (Article 26). The government need to conduct education on healthy home, including education on preparation for marriage, parental education, education on family ethics, and education on the realization of family values and on home life (Article 32). In addition to provide family education directly to the people, the government is also obligated and encourage and support NGOs to provide family education and other support services related to healthy homes (Article 33).

Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment

4.94 The *Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment* was enacted in 2007 to improve the quality of life of the people through promoting the recreation of a family-friendly social environment (Article 1). For the purpose of this Act, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family is charged with the responsibility to take measures to develop a family-friendly working environment, a family-friendly community environment, and a family-friendly culture (Article 9).

4.95 The Act empowers the Minister of Gender Equality and Family to develop a Family Friendly Index to measure the level of family friendliness of the workplaces and public institutions. The Minister of Gender Equality and Family shall from time to time announce the results of the Family Friendliness Index to the public to keep track of the progress of their efforts in fostering family friendliness in the community (Article 14).

4.96 The Minister of Gender Equality and Family is authorized to grant family-friendly certification to companies or public institutions with exemplary operation of family-friendly system in order to promote the creation of a family-friendly social environment (Article 15). The Minister is also empowered to revoke the certification granted to a company or public institutions if the latter violate the requirements for certification (Article 18).

Act on Equal Employment and Support for Work-family Reconciliation

4.97 An explicit aim of this Act is to protect maternity and promote female employment. Besides, the Act also intends to contribute to the improvement in quality of life of all people by supporting the reconciliation of work and family life for workers (Article 1). For the

purposes of this Act, the government is legally charged with the responsibility to support workers and employees to reconcile work and family life as well as to make efforts to raise financial resources and prepare conditions necessary for the reconciliation of work and family life (Article 4).

4.98 According to the Act, the Minister of Employment and Labor is responsible for setting up a basic plan on the realization of equal employment and the reconciliation of work and family life. Among others, the Basic Plan shall include maternity protection for female workers, support for the reconciliation of work and family life, and installation and operation of support facilities for female workers (Article 6-2). The Act also provides clear guidance on statutory measures for maternity leave (Article 18), paternity leave (Article 18-2), child care leave (Article 19), reduction of working hours for child care period (Article 19-2), support for child care, and support for family care. The Act also stipulates the responsibility of the employer in supporting their employees who return-to-work after maternity leave, paternity leave, childcare leave, or working hour reduction after their child care period (Article 19-6).

Key Operators for Family and Parents

Healthy Family Support Centers

4.99 Article 35 of the *Framework Act on Healthy Homes* charges the state and local governments with the responsibility for prevention and resolution of family problems as well as development of healthy families through the establishment of Healthy Home Support Centers. These centers are staffed by “healthy home officers” who have the knowledge and experience to perform healthy home services. Hitherto, there are altogether 141 healthy home centers nationwide.

4.100 To take Cheongju Healthy Home Support Center as example to illustrate the family support function of the healthy home support centers. Cheongju Healthy Home Support Center is an organization commissioned by the government in the Chungju city to enrich family functioning and prevent family problems through education, counseling, cultural activities, and caring programs. Its services include family life education, family counselling, cultural activities, child care training, unmarried teenage parent service, and risky family intervention.

4.101 A signature program of the Cheongju Healthy Home Support Center is the 3SEM project. 3SEM stands for three S (Smart, Smile, and Sharing) Eating Movement, which incorporates the concepts of health, pleasure, and sharing in daily eating within the families and with the neighbors. As such, the 3SEM project is not only for physical health, it also promotes emotional and social health by taking foods with family and neighbors.⁷³

Comprehensive Childcare Support Center

4.102 The Ministry of Health and Welfare announced the “Action Plan for Improvement of Childcare Service” in 2012 to support parents and families with young children. To the

⁷³ http://family.etvonline.hk/pdf/familyhub2010_3a_ppt08.pdf

Korean government, support for childcare service is an investment in nurturing human resources for the future of Korea and is one of the core financial policies to resolve the low-birth rate by women's supporting economic activities. For this reason, the Korean government takes responsibility for establishing the framework for the childcare with a policy principle that childcare is an investment for the future.⁷⁴

4.103 The Activation Plan of 2012 established that childcare at home is desirable for infants aged 0-2 who need emotional communion with parents. The government will therefore take responsibility to provide dual income parents with the needed childcare support. For families with children between 3-5 that are subject to the nurturing and education, all classes will be provided with the support through the de-facto mandatory education called "Nuri course."⁷⁵ Meanwhile, childcare allowances will be realigned to allow parents to make a choice between childcare at home and facility childcare depending on their situation.

School Parent Support Centers

4.104 The National Parent Support Centre (NPSC) was set up by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology under the auspices of the National Institute for Lifelong Education in 2010 to provide parents with information, disseminate best practices of parent involvement in schools, establish a network of local parent-support and support counseling services for parents. These local parent support center also offer programs to help parents improve their parenting skills in areas of communication and career guidance.⁷⁶

Measures to Promote Family Values

Certification of Family-friendly Corporation and Public Organization

4.105 In accordance with the *Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment*, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family put in place a certification through evaluation on the corporations or public organizations that exemplarily have operated family-friendly system on childbirth, childcare support, or flextime. At the end of December 2015, totally 1,363 corporations and organizations acquired the certification.⁷⁷

Family Love Campaign

4.106 The Minister of Gender Equality and Family also initiated the "Family Love Campaign" to have the workers depart their workplace on-time every Wednesday and encourage them to spend the spare time with their families. The campaign initiated with the

⁷⁴ http://www.mohw.go.kr/eng/sg/ssg0111vw.jsp?PAR_MENU_ID=1001&MENU_ID=100111&page=18&CNT_SEQ=268552

⁷⁵ The Nuri Course aims to promote holistic development of children aged 3-5 and establish overarching principles for becoming responsible citizens of the society based on the principles of (1) child-centred curriculum and (2) play-based curriculum.

⁷⁶ OECD(2012). *Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education*. PISA, OECA Publishing, p.48. Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264176232-en>

⁷⁷ http://www.mogef.go.kr/eng/policy/index04_01.jsp

belief that a small action to spend time with family in spite of a busy week life can be the first step to love family. Some video clips of this campaign are uploaded onto Youtube.⁷⁸

Family Day

4.107 The International Family Day was set up for the purpose of raising awareness of the public and private sectors about the importance of the roles and responsibilities of home years at the 44th General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 and 1994 was designated as the International Year of the Family. In February 2004, May 15 was stipulated by the Framework Act on Family Health as "Family Day" in Korea. Although the Family Day was inspired by foreign traditions, honoring family and education is indigenous to Korea. May is a month celebrating families and is therefore often called the "Family Month" in Korea since the Children's Day on May is 5th, Parents' Day on May 8th.

Measures to Promote Parent Education - The Parent Education Activation Plan

4.108 The Korean government recognizes the importance of parent education for both families and the country. In April, 2016, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family announced the Parent Education Activation Plan (The Plan)⁷⁹ in joint cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and other related ministries of the Korean government. Meanwhile, a Parent Education Task Force participated by representatives of these ministries to help parents understand their children as well as their parental roles in the growth and development of their children.

4.109 There are 3 major objectives of the Parent Education Activation Plan as a national blueprint for implementing parent education. First, the Plan aims to provide continuous education to parents basing on a family-cycle perspective; second, to concentrate support for parents in vulnerable families to develop their child care capacity; and third, to induce voluntary participation through constant campaign on the necessity of parent education.

Parent Education for All Basing on Family-life Cycle Perspective

4.110 An important feature of this plan is to systemize parent education under the family life cycle framework. To this end, the emphasis of the Plan is to develop and strengthen parent education based on major events in life having regards to the life cycle of a parent from before the marriage to the schooling period of their children.

4.111 The plan considers it is important to provide pre-parent and parent education to the young people as early as possible. This is evident in its proposal to implement education on the value of a family and on pre-parental education in the curricula of its elementary, middle and high schools. Besides, it proposes to include parent education in regular school curriculum in college, at army and before marriage. When young people have decided on marriage, the Plan also proposes to provide them with information on parent education and to

⁷⁸ For instance, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIJr-nZ6iMU&noredirect=1>

⁷⁹ <http://www.mogef.go.kr/eng/press/index04.jsp?id=eup0300&menuID=eup0300&mode=view&idx=7246>

encourage them to participate in parent education programs upon a marriage registration.

4.112 While family and pre-parent education are provided to young people through the schools, parent education at the stage of pregnancy and child birth is made available to parents-to-be in health care and social service settings. These include guidance on parent education and linking parents/parents-to-be to a healthy home support center or a maternity clinic, inclusion of parent education in programs of maternity clinics and postpartum care centers, as well as dissemination of parent education through child care facilities and kindergartens

4.113 For parents with children in the schooling age, reinforcement of parent education in schools and in other children and youth facilities is the focus. Besides, parent education is included in orientation programs or parent counseling week organized by schools. Parent education is also implemented in youth related programs such as Family Camp at National Youth Training Centre.

Developing Resources on Parent Education Based on Family-life Cycle Perspective

4.114 The Plan stipulates efforts to develop standard programs of family education based on a family-cycle perspective as a measure and to guarantee the quality of family education programs rendered by the service providers. In addition to using the family cycle perspective as a framework, the Plan also specifies the need to study people's understanding and their needs for parent education before preparing resources on parent education through a survey on parent education

Support for Vulnerable Families

4.115 A second feature of the Plan is to support vulnerable families, especially those which are at-risk of child maltreatment. The focus here is to help parents of vulnerable families to develop their capacity for childcare through parent education and family support services with a view to preventing child abuse and neglect. Support for vulnerable families include linking vulnerable families with family support services, counseling and education for parents with a high potential for child abuse and neglect, like those who are a convict or a probationer, and one-on-one personalized mentoring service to increase childrearing capacity through support and information by mentors.

To Promote Voluntary Participation in Parent Education Through Campaign

4.116 The Plan aims to promote voluntary participation in parent education. Hence, it includes national and local campaigns to promote parent education through different media. For instance, it institutes an annual Parent Education Week to raise public awareness of the importance of parent education. The Plan designates the week containing Family Day (May 15) as Parent Education Week annually for these purposes. For 2016, the Parent Education Week was the second week of May. All these efforts are directed at fostering a felt need for parent education among the people so that they can voluntary seek parent education voluntarily based on their own needs and circumstances.

Mandatory Parenting Classes Prior to Divorce

4.117 There are circumstances in which the Korean government believes mandatory parenting classes are necessary. Mandatory parenting classes prior to divorce are one such example. Starting in May 2016, parents who want to divorce will have to take parenting classes before they go their separate ways. Failure to attend the classes will result in the divorce application being denied. This mandatory parenting education for divorcing couples is aimed to reduce child abuse. The classes will cover various forms of child abuse that can occur both shortly before and after divorce, not only physical but psychological. The court will make guidelines on the education soon and distribute them to other courts across the country in mid-2016.

Monitoring and Evaluation of The Plan

4.118 The Korean Institute for Healthy Family was involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of family education programs and related policies. Besides, an inter-ministerial Parent Education Activation Task Force comprising representatives of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, and the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs was set up to periodically monitor the implementation of parent education in the country. Reports of the Task Force will be discussed in the ministerial meetings of the government.

Lessons Learned from South Korea

4.119 In addressing the challenges of industrialization and modernization to the families, the Korean governments have consistently taken an active role in instituting a range of measures to promote its national family values, to promote the development of healthy families, and to help its people reconcile between home and work through a range of legislations and their legal provisions in the past three decades. It sees its responsibility in providing support and making real choices available for people to reconcile work and family life. It also understands its roles in promoting family values through different national and local initiatives, like the Family Love Campaign, Family, Parents Day, and Parent Education Week. Recognizing the importance of parent and parent education play in making healthy families and communities, it has also recently announced an aggressive plan on family education to make family education both for all in different stages of the family life cycle and for vulnerable families with special needs. It is determined to see the Plan vigorously implemented, systemically monitored and evaluated, and improved through inter-ministerial cooperation.

Summary

4.120 Based on this desktop study on measures to support family and parenting in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea, there are some important lessons to be learned as Hong Kong seeks to develop measures on family support and parent education. Amongst these include:

Policy and Operational Framework

4.121 A clear policy framework is needed. This policy framework can be in the form of a legal framework, like the case of Taiwan or South Korea. Alternatively, it can be in the form of family policies, like the case of United Kingdom or Singapore.

4.122 In all places, efforts to support for family and parenting are organized around life stage and family development framework. People and family face different developmental tasks and issues in different stages and they need different support.

Leadership Role of Government

4.123 Strong leadership is needed. The governments of the other three little dragons play a central role in family and parent education. The British government seems a bit laid back, but is actually behind in developing the needed infrastructure.

4.124 Clear leadership is necessary. In South Korea, the Central Healthy Home Policy Committee is under the Prime Minister. In other places of this study, a responsible government bureau is put in charge of family and parent support.

All for Family and Parenting Support

4.125 Support for family and parenting is made by a collective concern in all four places. All sectors of the community are encouraged and mobilized for the building of a family-friendly community favorable to family development.

4.126 Family well-being cannot be achieved entirely through family and parent education. Collective efforts to develop a family-friendly environment and policies to assure a better work-family balance for healthy family development and positive child outcomes are evident in all four places.

Family and Parenting support for all

4.127 Family and parent education for all. As said, in all four places studied, family and parent education is organized, developed and made available for people in different stages of family development.

4.128 Family and parent education for life. In Taiwan, family is supported as a life-long learning institution through policy. In South Korea, family and parent education is linked institutions responsible for life-long education.

4.129 Family and parent education for the special groups. Like immigrants parents, parents who abuse their children, or parents with children who are at-risk or offending against the law. They should not be neglected in family and parent education.

Quality Assurance and Accountability

4.130 Quality of family and parent educators is important. The four places have different measures to address the standards of the professionals. In UK, the responsibility is bestowed on the NAPP whereas in Taiwan, the government is directly involved.

4.131 Knowledge development is crucial to quality family and parent education programs. In the United Kingdom and Taiwan, there is strong collaboration between government and universities to develop knowledge for family and parent education.

4.132 The availability of effective programs is an accountability concern, especially when public funds are involved. The United Kingdom, Taiwan and Singapore have made a lot of efforts in ascertaining the effectiveness of parenting programs.

Dissemination of Family and Parent Education

4.133 Family and parent education often involves cultivating values and attitudes on family and parenting. In all four places studied, the governments made a lot of efforts in promoting these values and attitudes through community-wide campaigns.

4.134 Schools and their curriculum play an important role in making family and parent education available to the young children in Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. In fact, family and parent education is part of the school curriculum.

4.135 Development of digital and online self-instructional materials is one of the viable strategies to make family and parent education available for all. Taiwan has developed a lot of digital books and online materials for this purpose.

4.136 For some families and parents, parent education is made mandatory, like the mandatory parenting classes introduced for divorcing parents in South Korea, and for parents with children who are in trouble with the law in Taiwan and the UK.

Chapter 5

Consultative Interviews

Stakeholders' Views on the Policy and Service Implications of this Study

Introduction

5.1 This study is based on a mixed research method consisting of different data collection strategies, including a territory-wide questionnaire survey to identify the general landscape of parenting practices in families in Hong Kong, focus group discussion with parent informants to attain a deep qualitative understanding of the parenting issues and factors associating with them, as well as a desktop study on the support for families and parenting abroad to throw light on the range of policy measures that Hong Kong may contemplate. Based on an all-round understanding of issues confronting families, parenting, and child outcomes as well as foreign experience to address these issues, the research team also conducted consultative interviews with relevant stakeholders to seek their views on the results of this consultancy study and on the possible policy measures to support families and parenting in Hong Kong. This chapter will present the method and results of the consultative interviews. It is hoped that the stakeholders' views can compensate for some of the limitations of this study and contribute to a range of feasible policy measures for supporting families and parenting in Hong Kong.

Method of Data Collection

5.2 There are different stakeholders who are involved in parenting in Hong Kong. These include parents, social service providers who are involved in family and parenting services, policy makers, academics in the relevant field, employers whose employment practices cast impact on families and parenting, and adolescents or young adults who spoke as children. The views of these stakeholders are important. Therefore, a total of 28 stakeholders were consulted in 7 individual interviews, and 5 focus group discussions.

5.3 All stakeholder informants were presented with the major findings of this study before the consultation process. After that, they were asked about their views on the results of the study, especially on whether or not these results are consistent with their observations and understanding of the issues confronting parents and their parenting practices in Hong Kong. They were also consulted on what possibly can be done to support families and parenting in the current context of the Hong Kong community. Basically, the set of questions presented to them for soliciting their views are as follows:

- a. Do you think the findings represent the scenarios of family and parenting in Hong Kong?
- b. Which aspects of family and parenting are not reflected in the findings of this study?
- c. What do you think are the policy and service implications of the findings of this study in the following areas:

- child, family, and parenting support;
 - education and home school collaboration;
 - employment and family friendly policies;
 - family and population policies ; and
 - others.
- d. Would you like to propose measures or initiatives to support child-rearing, family functioning and well-being and ways to promote positive values on raising children and family families in Hong Kong?
 - e. What do you think are the roles of the government, the NGOs, the community, and other significant parties in contributing healthy families and parenting practices in Hong Kong in the light of the findings of this study?
 - f. Do you think the experiences of UK, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea can be a reference for us in supporting families and parenting in Hong Kong?
 - g. Any other views/comments

5.4 All stakeholder informants participated in the consultation process on a voluntary basis. Upon receipt of their written consent, the consultation process began and followed the question order presented above. However, informants were free to skip any question or to focus on questions of concern to them. All individual interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours, and the focus group discussions lasted about 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours. All consultation processes were audiotaped for subsequent data management and analysis. Notes of the meeting were made by referring to the audio records and sent back to the informants for validation.

Views Collected from Stakeholders Consultation

On the Design of this Study

5.5 This being a mixed method research with data collection strategies to address both the breadth and depth of topic being studied, and with a focus not restricted to local vision of the issues at hand through inclusion of a desktop study to cover foreign experiences on the topic; almost all informants considered that the methods of data collection used for this study had been comprehensive and believed that they fitted the purposes of this study even, though the study duration does not allow a longitudinal design, and the cross-sectional data collected should be understood as correlational instead of causal.

On Findings of this Study

5.6 Again, almost all informants expressed at some point of the consultative process that the findings of this study are generally consistent with their observations and understanding about families and parenting in Hong Kong. An informant commented that results of the territory-wide questionnaire survey are basically in line with the findings of his past studies. Another informant said that this study has validated the existing government policy direction and objectives as regard support for child, family and parenting practices.

5.7 However, there were some feedbacks that parenting in some family groups might not have been given sufficient focus. Three informants were concerned with parenting difficulties in a lot of single-parent families, including role overloading, financial deprivation, and social prejudices against single-parent families. An informant shared that some new single-parents had still not recovered from the emotional turmoil of divorce. Another informant noted that a high percentage of inmates in correctional services institutions came from single-parent families.

5.8 The territory-wide survey shows that parents with only one child in the family generally manifested more parental warmth in parenting. One informant shared an observation from her work on issues with parenting a single-child. She raised that parenting a single-child may not be easy. In addition to over-parenting, stress associated with parenting a single child can be high because all attention is being focused on one child. It is also worth studying how it affects the well-being of the child and the parent-child relationship.

Parenting Practices in Hong Kong

Parenting is Not Easy

5.9 A common observation of the stakeholder informants is that parenting is not easy in Hong Kong. They were prone to agree that parenting is stressful in a lot of families. Their often-mentioned reasons for stressful parenting include, the parents' lack of knowledge and skills, absence of support from other family members and the neighbors, a narrow focus on children's academic achievement as a parenting goal, stress induced by teachers and schools through heavy their homework and assessment requirements, and encroachment of family life by the long hours of work of the parents. All these factors constitute an unfavorable family ecology for parents to discharge their parenting roles and responsibilities.

Parenting Does Not Prepare The Young Generation as Successors

5.10 There is a view that parenting is in crisis nowadays, in the sense that it is failing to prepare young people for a responsible life. The range of parenting problems includes irresponsible parenting, neglectful and abusive parenting, inadequate parenting, and over-parenting. There is a concern that failure in parenting has turned out a generation of children with a lot of problems, like an obvious lack of self-care ability, being socially uninvolved and economically non-engaged. The problem is also manifested in children and young people who are so self-centered that they are heedless of the feelings of other people, and children manifesting internalizing and externalizing behavior problems.

Family Functions at Stake

5.11 Stressful parenting and the parenting crisis that have contributed to a failure of the family in fulfilling its functions has caused concern among the stakeholder informants. Many of them have started to work on improving parenting practices. Among others, these include support for single parents, helping divorcing couple to fulfill their parent roles, support for parenting in new immigrant families, extending the hours of child care services, advocating

to reduce homework among primary school students, and fostering well-functioning families to help parents bring up children with positive developmental outcomes. Stakeholder informants strongly agreed that Hong Kong is in need of continued and concerted efforts to improve parenting practices.

Family, Parenting and Child Development

Functioning Families Facilitates Family Development and Well-being

5.12 Informants are clearly supportive of the family functioning perspective on family well-being, parenting and child outcomes. There is almost a consensus that a well-functioning family is a pre-requisite for good parenting and positive child outcomes. As one stakeholder informant said, we cannot prepare our young people for their future family life without having a vision on how families should be like and what functions families need to play in our society. Visionary parenting support needs to be conceived as part and parcel of the developing family policy in Hong Kong.

5.13 A well-functioning family contributes to overall family happiness, a term used by most parent informants to refer to family well-being. Stakeholder informants generally agreed that family well-being consists of material and psycho-emotional aspects. However, one informant raised that it is also important to include spiritual well-being, a quality which makes parents to discharge their parenting roles in times of adversity. For instance, if parents believed it is worthwhile to make parental sacrifice for their children, the latter are more likely to manifest positive outcomes.

Well-functioned Families Benefit Society

5.14 Families which are functioning well do not only contribute to the overall family happiness, which is a universal goal of all families. In fact, stakeholder informants support that psycho-emotional well-being manifested in values like love, respect for other family members, care, support and family unity are also held to be qualities for happy and well-functioning families, which are the cornerstone of the society. As one stakeholder informant said, “developing these qualities in families can enhance their capacity for challenges and hardships, raising their resilience level and ability to bounce back in times of adversity.”

Material Well-being is Important Basis for Good Functioning

5.15 Responding to a finding of the focus group discussion with parent informants that the material basis of family happiness was often not discussed a lot, a stakeholder informant believed that material well-being is an important basis of family well-being. He noticed that children in deprived families commonly have low self-esteem. Hence, he advocated rights-based approach in responding to children’s material needs. In this regard, he proposed to adopt a population based policy, coupling with the principles of proportionate universalism and targeted intervention to help families, parents, and children in HK.

Society Needs to Invest on Enhancing Family Functioning

5.16 Enhancing family functioning is not only considered as an overall strategy to improve parenting practices and child outcomes in general. It is also regarded as a viable approach to achieve better family well-being and child outcomes in vulnerable families. A clear view was expressed that it is also necessary to focus on certain groups in supporting families and parenting in the light of their apparent difficulties, like new immigrant families, families of ethnic minorities, as well as single parent families. Improvement in functioning of these families help moderate the undesirable effects of family structure and SES and thus child outcomes.

A Public Health Approach to Improve Family Functioning and Parenting

Population-based

5.17 With families being embedded in communities, its functioning is significantly affected by the mainstream culture of the community. Stakeholder informants with medical and health backgrounds suggested a public health approach targeting on the community to minimize the risk factors and foster protective factors in the environment. To this end, a population-based public education to promote awareness of positive parenting and adjust expectation through concerted efforts of the key partners is needed. With a more facilitating environment, our community could be more conducive to child development.

Enhanced Service Provision for Target Populations

5.18 This environment-changing effort takes time to accomplish. There is an opinion that there are enhanced service provision by different service providers to complement the population-based public health approach to changing values and public attitudes in the community. Through enhanced service provisions, NGOs can target the specific needs of the deprived parents, including changing their mindset and improving their parenting skills. Through these efforts, parents will know that academic achievement is not everything, and that raising happy and healthy children are equally important; and eventually as a stakeholder informant said, the environment would be changed gradually.

Evidence-based Programs

5.19 One core condition for the success of a public health approach is the availability of evidence-based programs. Effective intervention in families and parenting hinges on the availability of evidence-based programs. There is a suggestion that, in making family and parent education available to people in Hong Kong, only those evidence-based programs should be promoted. This is also in consideration of the fact that family and parent education programs are largely supported by public funds. Hence, some suggested following the example of the UK government in supporting research studies to develop and identify a pool of effective family and parent education programs before making them available to the general public.

Inter-sectoral Collaboration

5.20 Other core elements of a public health approach such as inter-sectoral collaboration, and surveillance of the problems were proposed. In working with families and parents in different stages of their life course, different sectors and service providers are involved. Concerted efforts by different parties are important. Besides inter-sectoral collaboration, surveillance of the problems is important. Studies to chart changes in measures that indicate the effects of family and parent education programs on family functioning and parenting practices is necessary to keep track of the effects of intervening in family and parenting programs.

A Life Stage Approach to Family and Parent Education

5.21 There is a view that current provision of family and parent education is piecemeal. They are developed and provided by different service operators without a coherent framework. Quite a lot of stakeholder informants recommended the use of a family development framework to develop and organize family and parent education for people in different life stages, like what is commonly the case in the other three little dragons. Specifically, there is a suggestion that the needs of families and parents in different stages of the family development are outlined as a basis and an overarching framework for different service providers to develop their own ‘signature’ parenting programs based on their own strengths and experience.

5.22 Support for using a life stage approach is also based on the understanding that family and parent education is a life-long learning process for all family members. It is without this understanding that the current family and parent education programs were developed without a pro-active stance. The development of grandparent education is a case in point. Though it comes a little bit late, an informant highly regarded recent attempts by the government and NGOs to develop this initiative. If a life stage approach is used to develop family and parent education, it will be available to family members in different stages of their life.

5.23 A mother informant was particularly supportive to coupling family and parent education with life-long education. She pointed out the popular belief that it is important to add values to one’s employability through continued education and training for the trade. However, she sighed at the neglect of the general public to spare time for developing the needed attitudes, knowledge and competence for quality family life. She was happy in learning that Taiwan has made policies to support families to become a life-long learning institution. She believed Hong Kong can make reference to the policies in Taiwan.

5.24 In using the family development framework as an overarching framework for different service providers to develop family and parenting programs, some informants were concerned that existing uncoordinated efforts might persist. Hence, there is a suggestion that different government departments and service providers are mapped onto the development and provisions of the family and parent education programs so that there are clear division of responsibilities among them. Moreover, concerted efforts of all those who are involved in the

service provisions through a central coordinating policy is necessary for effective responses to improve family well-being and parenting competence.

Family and Parent Education for All

5.25 While the life stage and family development approach offers a comprehensive framework for developing family and parent education programs in Hong Kong, there is a view that family and parent programs should also target at the circumstances faced by a lot of the parents in the local context. Some of the parenting programs suggested that are relevant to parents in Hong Kong include:

Reflective Parenting

5.26 This is based on the finding that parents are able to learn from their experience. Parenting programs can help parents to understand how their growing up experience affect the ways they parent their children. They can also help parents to reflect on whether or not their parenting practices works to achieve their parenting goals. By cultivating self-reflection and learning from their own experience, parents will be engaged in a continued process of becoming better parents.

Know Your Children

5.27 Parents in Hong Kong commonly hope that their children will become dragons. They often lose sight of their children's developmental needs and push them to achieve something beyond their competence and abilities to do so. This in turn leads to poor parent-child relationship and mounting parenting stress. Parenting programs can be developed to educate parents to know the developmental needs of their children in different life stages.

Seeing Your Children Positively

5.28 Parents in Hong Kong tend to use a deficit lens to see their children. A lot parents see no strengths in their children, if the latter are not academically achieving. Parent education can be developed and disseminated more widely to enable parents see their children positively. Specifically, parents are to be equipped to see that every child is good in his own ways and they can foster positive child outcomes through seeing strengths in their kids.

Listening to Your Children

5.29 Stakeholder informants generally agreed that Hong Kong parents are more parent-centered, often to the neglect of their children views in making important decisions affecting children. Parent education programs can help parents acquire a child perspective in seeing things. Specifically, parenting programs can help parents develop the needed attitude and skills to listen to the children. If parents are more children empathic, parenting will be less authoritarian and imposing.

Family and Parent Education for Special Groups

5.30 Based on the findings of this study, parents of low socio-economic status, single-parent, and remarried families are disadvantaged groups at-risk of poor parenting and negative child outcomes. Some stakeholder informants consider it important to focus on these groups in promoting positive parenting as a strategy to improve child outcome. There is also the view that, improving parenting practices for these disadvantaged family groups can be a good strategy to resolve the problem of inter-generational poverty. Good parenting practices and positive child outcomes also generate hope in these families and it is a viable strategy to sustain them in adversity.

Programs for Single-parents

5.31 Family and parent education for single-parents was frequently raised by the stakeholder informants. Problems faced by single-parents were said to be much more than the lack of income and other material deficiency. Some single-parents became dependent, low in self-esteem after long years of receiving CSSA, and many of them were looked down upon by their own children. Single parents should be helped to stand on their own feet to enable them acquire skills to making a living when situation allows, such as when their children become adolescents and are able to take care of themselves. They can become more confident parents when they are able to work and contribute to the maintenance of the family.

Programs for Divorced Couples

5.32 Problems confronted by couples seeking separation and divorce for divorce education is also a concern of quite a number of stakeholder informants, having regard to the observation that a lot of couple conflicts are detrimental to child outcomes are quite common in their families. Divorce commonly involves a lot of parenting issues and difficulties. In the view of an informant with extensive experience in working with single-parents, a lot of parenting issues of the single-parents are due to their failure to resolve these emotional issues during the divorce process. Divorce education can help parents deal with emotional issues like hatred for the other spouse associated with the divorce process.

Family and Parent Education for the Unmotivated

Mandatory Programs

5.33 Quite a number of stakeholder informants were concerned that parents needing family and parent education more are usually less willing to participate in parenting programs i.e. the more needy parents among whom including single-parents and parents seeking divorce are more difficult to reach. One of the informants suggested making reference to some communities in Canada where parents can be mandated to receive parenting courses after separation. Another informant suggested to follow the example of Singapore, where couples wanting to split up but cannot agree on matters such as co-parenting plans will have to attend a mandatory parenting program - even before filing for a divorce.

Incentive Payment

5.34 In addition to mandatory parent education, there is a suggestion to provide monetary incentive to increase the motivation of the single-parents to receive parent education. One informant who is a service provider recommended the government to financially subsidize single-parents to attend parenting classes. Another informant suggested coupling parenting classes with receipt of CSSA benefits, especially for single-parents who cannot go out to work because their children are young in age. That is to say, these parents are also offered parenting classes which they must attend as a condition to receiving CSSA. He also opined that monetary incentives can be paid to disadvantaged families to encourage parents to seek parent education.

Family and Pre-Parenthood Education for Young People

Early Education

5.35 The need of young people for family and pre-parenthood education has been frequently raised as measures that need to be addressed in our community. An informant who is involved in home-school collaboration pointed out that students of today may become parents in the future. He supported to instill proper family and parenthood values to the young people as early as possible. This view is also positively echoed by a number of other stakeholder informants during the consultation process.

Curriculum-based

5.36 With regards to what is done in the other three little Asian dragons, there is clear support among the stakeholder informants to make the school an important venue to provide family and parent education to young people through formal and informal school curriculum. The general education curriculum of the universities and tertiary institutes can also be designed to include family and parenthood education to prepare our young people for a responsible family life and parenthood in the future.

Preparation for Parenthood

5.37 While informants generally appreciated the idea to deliver parenting education and values to young people as early as possible, some informants suggested that there should be differentiation pre-parenthood offered to young people through the schools and parenting education offered to the parents. They suggested that it is good to instill positive family values and attitudes towards parenting in the secondary schools and in the university, while actual parenting knowledge and skills can be deferred to parenting programs targeted for parents-to-be and parents later when young people enter the stage of parenthood.

Role of the Government in Family and Parent Education

5.38 Compared with the other 3 little dragons in Asia, that is Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, there is a general consensus among the stakeholder informants that the role of

the Hong Kong government in family and parent education is somewhat passive. There is a clear expectation on the government to assume a more leading role in supporting families and parenting. These include developing policies and supporting research to steer the development of family and parent education, as well as putting in more resources for these development.

5.39 Specifically, there is a view that Hong Kong is in need of stronger infrastructural support to promote and develop support measures for family and parenting. The government also needs to consider developing a clear family policy in supporting families and parenting. Moreover, it is said that current policies and services on families and parent education are scattered in different policy bureau. There is a clear view that the government needs to assign a lead policy bureau to steer the development of support policies for family and parents in Hong Kong.

5.40 Stakeholder informants also suggested that the government set aside funds to help developing and financing the operation of evidence-based family and parent education programs, as well as providing financial incentives to encourage families to participate in programs aiming at enhancing family well-being and parenting competence. The government can also consider to subsidize SMEs in instituting family-friendly measures or to support SMEs to organize and run activities, programs, or family and parenting education for their employees and their families.

5.41 Specifically, there is a recommendation that the government can set up a family development fund to support initiatives and measures to improve family well-being and parenting quality. The setup and operation of the family development may resemble the ways the Quality Education Fund is managed and used to develop quality education in Hong Kong. Stakeholder informants who are employers are very supportive of this idea. They believe that the fund can support SMEs to initiate more family-friendly initiatives to support the families of their employees.

5.42 The government is also suggested to set a good example for the employers in initiating family-friendly employment policies and measures in Hong Kong. Stakeholder informants who are employers were sympathetic of the limitations of SMEs in being more responsive to contribute to the well-being of their employees' families. Some measures like marriage leave, family leave and parental leave will cause real difficulties to SMEs. However, they believed that the government is in a better position to take the lead and set a good example.

Roles of the Schools, Workplace, and Community

Collective Responsibility

5.43 The general consensus supporting family and parents should not be the sole responsibility of the government. One informant specifically pointed out the importance of the leadership role of the government in setting priority to support family and parenting,

positive involvement of the experts and stakeholders, and active participation of the public. It is said that if the government succeeds in getting all parties to involve actively in improving family well-being and parenting, the community will become a benign environment for families, parenting and positive child outcomes.

Schools

5.44 During the consultation process, there is common understanding among the stakeholders that schools often create a lot of stress in parent-child relationship and parenting through heavy homework and assessment. However, there are different attributions tendencies to the stress transmitted from schools to the families. Some considered the schools responsible, some regarded it a result of the strong achievement culture of the community, still some thought it was due to failure of parents to choose a right school for their kids.

5.45 There is a clear view that the education system including school operation and school curriculum are in need of a comprehensive review. Specifically, the education system can be made less assessment-oriented, schools be oriented to make them a happy place for children's learning, and the curriculum be trimmed down to cover what is most essential for children of their age. Informants understood that these suggestions are easier made than put in practice. However, they believe these are the right directions that our education system should be heading.

5.46 Some did not think parents were to be blamed for putting their children in achievement-oriented schools. Despite the introduction of the Direct Subsidy Scheme in 1991 that enables schools to have greater flexibility curriculum design, there is not much improvement in the variety of schools. Parents often have no choice and easily end up finding their children a traditional school which places a lot of emphasis on curriculum learning and academic achievement. The repertoire of school variety needs to be further expanded to suit children of different needs. Also, some suggested making a wider use of home-schooling in Hong Kong.

5.47 Measures introduced in overseas countries are suggested as references for Hong Kong to make schools a happy place for children's learning. Examples include the *No Child Left behind Act* introduced by the former President George W. Bush in the United States in the early 2000s and efforts of the Singaporean government to make "Every school is a good school" created a powerful impact on the mindset of parents. Similarly, parents can be reminded of the importance of a positive schooling experience for their children with the local measure. In this regard, the happy school initiative and the Joyful@School project can be powerful reminders for parents in Hong Kong.

Workplace

5.48 Stakeholder informants, including those who are employers, are generally aware of the potential conflicts between work and family. They are supportive of a more family-friendly workplace. However, employers did express the concern that SMEs may not be financially capable to do a lot in implementing family-friendly measures. However, they

do believe that the government can influence large businesses and enterprises to be more family-friendly in their employment policies and practices.

5.49 There is a suggestion from the employers that the government may consider granting tax rebate to companies that finance family activities or programs for their employees and their families out of their own budget. One informant suggested that the government can mandate big corporate companies to designate a certain percentage of their budget, say 1%, to implement family-friendly measure that help improve the well-being of their employees' families.

5.50 Informants also suggested employers to open their workplace to family members of their employees. Some informants were nostalgic of their days as kids when they were brought to their parents' workplace. They highly regarded this experience and agreed that this was conducive to better parent-child relationship, believing that this would foster better understanding of their parents by the children, at least in terms of the work which their parents were doing every day. This positive interface between work and family is said to be able to nullify the negative spillover of work to the family

Neighborhood

5.51 There is an observation that neighbors and neighborhood have almost completely lost their community support function in Hong Kong. This makes families and parenting stressful in times of need and crises. Now that most of the neighbors being strangers, the result is loss of the buffering role of neighborhood support. In fact, families and parents easily find themselves in isolation during difficult times nowadays. Though it is not easy, some informants suggested reclaiming the mutual support functions of neighbors and neighborhood as a measure to support families and parenting in Hong Kong.

Religious Organizations

5.52 An informant reminded us that religious organizations can play an important role in fostering family well-being and positive child outcomes. Many religious organizations are actively involved in supporting family life and parenting. They fulfill an important informal support functions in the society. Religious bodies can also develop spiritual well-being of parents and families, which help them tide over adversity. This informant suggested that religious bodies like churches can be counted on for their support for families and parenting.

Family as Neighbors

5.53 Informants generally agreed that family relationships are still at the core of people's social network. The neighborhood is having diminishing importance in people's social lives though, members of kinship living next door, down the street, or a few blocks away greatly enhances aid and support to parents and families. Its takes time to reclaim the community support function of neighbors and neighborhoods. However, kinship living close together in the neighborhood can be possible through people's own choice. There is a suggestion that the government can facilitate "family neighbors" through public policies.

It takes a village to raise a child – Concerted Efforts of All

5.54 Informants shared the view that supporting family and parenting should not be left to the responsibility of any single party. With this understanding, the government is not to be solely responsible for improving family well-being, parenting practices, and positive child development. As one informant who quoted the title of a book by the former First Lady of the United States, Hilary Clinton, in illustrating her view that collective effort of the entire community is needed in bringing positive child development – It takes a village to raise a child. Good parents cannot raise their children alone and we do need good neighbors and neighborhood, good schools, good culture, good government policy and good services to provide the soil.

Summary

5.55 This chapter presents the views of the stakeholders both on the findings of this study as well as on the policy and service implications of it. Based on interviews and focus group discussion with stakeholders including parents themselves, social service providers who are involved in family and parenting services, are makers of policies and employers, whose employment practices have an impact on families, parenting and children themselves. Stakeholders agreed that findings of this study are largely consistent with the observations about families and parenting in Hong Kong, and they were pleased to learn the findings on policies and measures to support families and parenting abroad. While different informants may have different views on what can be or needs to be done in family and parenting support, they had shared quite a lot of things they had been doing and provided a range of suggestions to support families and parenting in Hong Kong. In sum, there is a central role of the government to steer the development of related policies and measures, but the concerted efforts of all parties in the community is needed to improve family well-being, parenting practices and child outcomes in Hong Kong.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

6.1 The objectives of this final chapter are fourfold. First, it will revisit the objectives and methods of this study. Second, it will recapitulate the major findings of different methods of data collection. Third, it will attempt to provide an overall framework to organize and integrate these findings so that they can contribute to the development of a policy direction to support parenting and child rearing relevant to the situation in Hong Kong. Lastly, the chapter will make a set of recommendations to improve parenting and positive child development based on the findings of this study.

Objectives and Methods of this Study

6.2 This is a study on the parenting practices in Hong Kong. As such, this study is conducted with two important objectives, namely, (1) to give a comprehensive account of current parenting practices in Hong Kong, and (2) to identify factors affecting parenting practices, parenting stresses, child development, and family functioning. Achievement of these two objectives is believed to be able to provide a good picture on the complex relationships among family functioning, parenting practices, and various child outcomes.

6.3 For the abovementioned objectives, a multi-method approach was adopted for this consultancy study. This includes (1) a territory-wide questionnaire survey with 2,000 families which are randomly selected via a multi-stage probability sampling strategy via schools in Hong Kong; (2) focus group discussion with 79 parent informants from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds in Hong Kong; (3) desktop survey of parenting and family support in four selected places; and (4) consultation with 28 stakeholders via individual interviews or focus group discussions to solicit their views on services and policies for parenting and family support based on the findings of this study.

Major Findings of Different Data Collection Methods

Territory-wide Questionnaire Survey

Demographic Information

6.4 Of the 2,000 families in the sample, 1,510 completed and returned the set of questionnaires sent to them. The response rate is 75.5%.

6.5 Immigrant families with at least one parent living in Hong Kong for less than seven years take up 13.50% of the 1510 families in this survey.

6.6 All families in the questionnaire survey have between 1 to 5 under-aged children. One-child families consists of 30.90% of the sample and two-child families 55.42%.

6.7 For both father and mother respondents, more than half had secondary education, and 18.99% families had both parents with tertiary education.

6.8 Half of the families were with family income between 10,000HKD and 30,000HKD. In this survey, 65.15% families had income lower than the median.

6.9 There were 16.37% high SES families (both parents with tertiary education plus family income above median) and 60.98% low SES families (with at least one parent with secondary level or below plus family income below the median).

6.10 About 82% of the 1,510 families were with both parents in their first marriage. The rest of the sample is divorced, remarried or single-parent families.

6.11 There were 105 single mothers and 33 single fathers, and totally 138 or 9.14% of the families in this survey were single-parent families.

Parenting Styles, Parenting Practice, and Parenting Stress

6.12 In this study, parenting style defined as the composite of beliefs and attitudes that provide the context for parenting behaviors is measured with the Parent Treatment Scale (PTS) (Shek, 1995). Results show that the average paternal, maternal and parental warmth are 4.90, 4.93 and 4.91 respectively. The corresponding results of a study by Shek (2000) are 4.57, 4.64 and 4.60 respectively. This represents an increase of 6% to 7% in parental warmth over a 15-year period.

6.13 Parenting practice is measured with the Parenting Scale (PS) to identify the extent to which parenting practice is dysfunctional or problematic. This study finds that the average paternal, maternal and parental scores on the 7-point PS are 3.57, 3.64, and 3.61 respectively. In a similar study, the Department of Health (2004) finds that the dysfunctional parenting scores of the 1,505 parent respondents with preschool children was 3.57. It appears that the functionality of parenting practice was rather stable in the past decade.

6.14 Parenting stress is measured with the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) to identify the level of stress in parenting children. This average score for paternal, maternal and paternal stress are 89.85, 90.76 and 90.57 respectively. A study by Lam (1999) found that the average parental stress of her parents' sample from the primary school is 100.755. Comparing findings of this with the results of Lam (1999), it seems that the level of parenting stress has reduced by almost 10 percent.

6.15 Father and mother respondents did not significantly differ in parental warmth and parental stress; however, father respondents showed significantly less dysfunctional parenting practice than mother respondents.

Effect of Family Structure on Parenting and Child Outcomes

6.16 Immigrant family status did not affect parenting, except that mothers of an immigrant family had higher parental stress than mothers of a local family.

6.17 Generally speaking, first marriage families, two-parent families, high SES families and one-child families showed higher parental warmth, less dysfunctional parenting practice, and higher parenting stress.

6.18 Similar to the findings in para 6.16, first marriage family, two-parent families, high SES families, and one child families showed better parent-child relationship.

6.19 Among all demographic variables representing family structures, only family SES affected most child outcomes.

Effect of Parenting and Parent-Child Relationship on Child Outcomes

6.20 Parental warmth, parenting practice, and parenting stress were associated with all child outcomes.

6.21 Compared to children aged 3~8, children aged 9~14 were affected less by parental warmth and dysfunctional parenting in terms of academic success.

6.22 Better parent-child relationship was associated with more positive child outcomes.

Effect of Parenting in Reducing Effect of SES

6.23 For both 3~8-year-old and 9~14-year-old children, better parenting and parent-child relationship facilitate higher child well-being and family well-being, even though the families were in low SES.

Conclusion on Survey Findings

6.24 Results of the survey suggest that family structure has an effect on parenting and child outcomes. Parenting and parent-child relationship are less likely to be a problem for first marriage families, two-parent families, high SES families and one-child families. Family SES affected most child outcomes.

6.25 However, results also show that parenting style, parenting practice and parenting stress are associated with all child outcomes in this study. Also, better parenting and better parent-child relationship apparently facilitate higher child well-being and family well-being, even though the families were in low SES.

6.26 In other words, the observed effect of family structure on child outcomes and family well-being is more likely to be by way of its effects on various aspects of family functioning like parenting and family relationship. Family functioning can moderate the undesirable effects of family structure and SES.

6.27 Measures to enhance family functioning through improving parenting practice, reducing parenting stress, and fostering better parent-child relationship, which are viable measures to raise overall family well-being and develop better child outcomes in Hong Kong.

Focus Group Interviews with Parent Informants

Demographic Background

6.28 A total of 79 parent informants participated in 15 focus group discussion sessions conducted between October 7, 2015 and May 31, 2016 in either the PolyU or in the social service agencies.

6.29 These 79 parent informants include lone-parents, new immigrant parents, parents of ethnic minority groups, and parents with children with disabilities and/or special learning needs.

6.30 These 79 parent informants expressed their views on issues on family, parenting, and child development pertinent to this study. They also share their views on the relationship among family, parenting and child development.

Family and Family Well-being

6.31 There is a clear view that family well-being is the equivalent of a happy family, one in which every family member is happy. They also agree that a happy family should be cherished by all families.

6.32 Informants commonly conceive family well-being to consist of both material and psycho-emotional well-being. They hold the view that a family needs to do well in both for its members to be happy.

6.33 Informants understand material well-being mainly as the financial capability of a family to afford the basic material needs of its family members. They think it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for family well-being.

6.34 Informants refer psycho-emotional well-being to communication, support, respect, family time, and health of the family members. Informants generally consider psycho-emotional well-being as more important for a family.

6.35 Many aspects of psycho-emotional well-being expressed by the parent informants in the focus group discussions, reflects how well a family is functioning. Family functioning is closely related to family well-being.

Landscape of Parenting in Hong Kong

Parenting Goals

6.36 Not listed in order of priority, the three most important parenting goals often mentioned by parent informants in the focus group discussions are: (1) good academic performance, (2) health, and (3) happiness of their children.

6.37 Other parenting goals mentioned include turning out culturally compliant children in terms of being obedient, filial, and polite, etc. and rearing up successful children who can have a good career, or who can make a good living on their own.

Parenting Methods

6.38 More parent informants exhibited parent-centered parenting as opposed to child-centered parenting. They parent their children by referring to what is best for their kids. Not many parents listen to what their children want.

6.39 In eliciting behaviors which parents consider desirable, parent informants commonly give commands to their children. They are less likely to use strategies like encouragement, reasoning and setting examples.

6.40 Shared parenting is getting more common, especially among families with younger and better educated couple. However, parenting still falls more on the maternal shoulders. Support between parents is not a common mode of parenting in Hong Kong.

6.41 Consistency and conflicts both characterise parenting practices in Hong Kong, even for couples with better demographic backgrounds. Good relationship and communication between spouses contribute to consistent parenting.

6.42 Many parent informants parent their children mostly by trial-and-error. However, most of them shared that they can learn from their experiences or from others to become better parents if they want to.

Parenting Stress

6.43 Parenting is rather stressful in HK; Forty-five percent of the parent informants rated “8” or above on a 10-point scale for their parenting stress at the time of the focus group interview.

6.44 Intra-familial factors contribute to parenting stress. Reported by the parent informants, these factors include children with disabilities and special needs, poor family relationships and lack of support from spouse or extended families.

6.45 Schools are reported to be a significant source of stress to the parents. Schools induce stress in parenting through their plentiful homework, tests, and achievement-oriented educational practice.

6.46 Factors associated with the workplace are also stressors to parenting. Work also exerts stress on parents through its long-working hours as well as lack of family-friendly work policies and practices.

Parenting Competence

6.47 At the time of the focus group discussion, the average parenting competence score of the all parent informants is 6.3 on a 10-point scale, which is somewhat a bit better than a mere “pass”

6.48 As revealed in the focus group discussion, high parenting competence and high parenting stress can co-exist. There are also parents low in both parenting competence and parenting stress.

6.49 Based on what parent informants shared in the focus group discussion, low parenting competence is not necessarily a quality that cannot be changed. Parents can learn to become better parents through their efforts.

Child Outcomes

6.50 According to the parent informants, child outcomes are dependent on their parenting practices and a host of other factors to which children are exposed. These factors are both inside and outside the family.

6.51 Apart from intra-familial and extra-familial factors, based on what parent informants share in the focus group discussion, child outcomes also depends on children who are autonomous agents taking on an active role in their own development.

6.52 Children actively tell parents how parenting should be like through a myriad of ways, spoken or unspoken. Few children directly communicate to parent what they want. The majority tell parents through resistance, talking back, and being rebellious.

6.53 Listening to children and adjusting parenting practices to suit children’s circumstances are important in improving child outcomes. Parent informants with good self-awareness learn to be better parents from their children through listening to them.

Conclusion on Focus Group Discussions with Parent Informants

6.54 Family well-being, parenting practices, and child outcomes are inter-related. A well-functioning family is a necessary condition for effective parenting and is the cornerstone of good child outcomes.

6.55 An integrated view of family well-being, parenting, and child outcomes premising on family functioning means that no single measure is enough to ensure family well-being and good child outcomes.

6.56 Good family functioning is the key to family well-being, effective parenting practices and positive child outcomes. As such, measures to enhance child outcomes need to be premised on a “family first” principle.

6.57 “Family first” means family and child support measures should focus on enhancing family functioning with positive effects on parenting and child outcomes, rather than working on the parents or on the children per se.

6.58 Based on the ecological perspective, family well-being and good family functioning cannot be achieved without addressing challenges presented by the environment embedding the families, like those from schools and work.

Desktop Study on Supporting Families and Parenting in Different Places

Places Studied

6.59 For the purposes of this consultancy study, policies and programs to support families and parenting in 4 places were studied. These include the United Kingdom, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea.

6.60 UK is included in the study because England is regarded by UNICEF as “an example of a highly developed and wide-ranging parenting support policy” (Daly et al, 2015, p.20). The other three places are the so-called ‘little dragons’ in Asia.

The United Kingdom

6.61 The British governments have made consistent efforts in promoting family values, family-friendly policies, and positive parenting as one of the key elements of family support in assuring a good foundation for child development.

6.62 A three-pronged approach to supporting families and parents which include: (1) encouraging initiatives in developing strong families; (2) focusing on supporting family relationships by enabling families to help themselves; and (3) cultivating good parenting to help families raise their children.

6.63 The government helps or encourages setting up organizations like the Family and Parenting Institute (FPI)/Family and Childcare Trust, National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP), the National Academy for Parenting Research (NAPR), Family Lives and Parenting UK as infrastructural support for parenting.

6.64 Parents Week and National Family Week are set up to celebrate parents and families. The Parenting Fund was established to build and strengthen the work with parents and families. In addition, the Family Friendly Scheme was launched to make UK a more family friendly society. Family Report Cards and Family Test were also introduced to give feedback to government on the impacts of their policies on families.

6.65 The governments have also been involved in supporting the identification and introduction of evidence-based parenting programs to help improve parenting as a means to assure good start and development of the children, through such efforts as; the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinders (2006-2008), Parenting Early Intervention Program (2008-2010), and the CANparent Trial in 2012.

6.66 In sum, the British governments have made lots of efforts in promoting family values, family friendly policies, and positive parenting as key elements of family support to assure a good foundation for child development. It is actively involved in supporting the

identification and introduction of evidence-based parenting program to help improve parenting to assure good start and development of the children

Singapore

6.66 Singapore government sees that it plays a vital role in parenting and family, and has initiated different policies to encourage and support Singaporeans to fulfill their marriage and parenthood aspirations.

6.68 Among others, the Singapore government is trying to cultivate a family-friendly environment where parents can get all rounded support from the government, family members, community and coworkers.

6.69 The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and Ministry of Manpower (MOM) work with public bodies like Families for Life, Housing and Development Board, People's Association and different social service partners to support individuals and families.

6.70 To facilitate marriage formation, encourage families to give birth to more children and improve support provided to families in different stages, the Jubilee Marriage & Parenthood Package (M&P) was introduced. The M&P provides a full range of financial incentives for raising children,

6.71 The Singapore government also nurtures a pro-family environment through a range of measures, which include the Pro-Family Leave Schemes, Maternity Leave and Benefits, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave, Infant Care Leave and Child Care Leave. Many of these leave plans are government-paid.

6.72 The Singapore government also enhances a pro-family environment by helping employers develop a pro-family workplace so that employees can gain a better balance between work and family through the Development Grant and Flexible Work Arrangement Incentives.

6.73 As far as parenting programs are concerned, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is working with the Education Ministry to make parenting programs and resources more accessible to parents through their children's schools. Key parenting programs include the Triple-P and the Signposts

6.74 The MSF works with the businesses, employers, schools and community to initiate the Family Matters Movement to create a pro-family environment through instilling positive values towards family, marriage and parenthood, as well as informing, educating, empowering individuals through their life journey to form and build strong families.

6.75 Clearly, parenting and family supports in Singapore are geared towards family and social development which is vital for its national development. Therefore, the government has all along been playing a key role in family and parenting support.

Taiwan

6.76 Taiwan is the first place in Asia to develop a comprehensive legal framework for the provision of family education. In 2003, it enacted the *Family Education Act* (家庭教育法) to promote family life knowledge, facilitating physical and mental development of the public, building happy families, and creating a peaceful society. The main coverage of the *Act* includes:

- the central government is responsible for the legislation, research and development, planning and promotion of family education territory-wide in Taiwan;
- and the local governments is responsible for the planning, implementing, and monitoring of family education at the local levels, including the setting up and operation of the family education centers;
- Multi-sector involvement, including the universities which play an important role in development knowledge and practice in family education; and NGOs as operators of family education services;
- all senior high schools and below are required to provide at least 4 hours of family education courses per year, and men and women eligible for marriage are entitled to no less than 4 hours of pre-marital education.

6.77 *The Regulations for the Training and Certification of Family Educators* (家庭教育專業人員資格遴聘及培訓辦法) enacted in accordance with the Family Education Law stipulates clear operational details to set up a certification system of family educators and curriculum requirements for family educators training programs.

6.78 *The Children and Youth Welfare Act* (兒童及青少年福利法) and the *Juvenile Delinquency Act* (少年事件處理法) provided the legal basis for the government or the juvenile court to mandate parents or guardians with children who are at-risk or who violated against the law to take mandatory parental education and counseling.

6.79 Development and making available for a wide range of parenting education materials on the web for use by parents with different needs, like the Website for Child Rearing and Parenting and the Family Education Website who provide a lot of online parent education materials.

6.80 As far as family support is concerned, the *Public Assistance Act* (社會救助法) and the *Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship* (特殊境遇家庭扶助條例) provides special assistance in cash and in kind to families in need and those suffering from hardship with a view to helping them to stand on their own feet and improving their living environment.

6.81 Besides, a range of labor laws has been in place in Taiwan and these provide for maximum working hours (8 hours a day or 40 hours a week), marriage leave (8 days), maternity leave (8 weeks before and after delivery), paternity leave (5 days) and parental leave (unpaid for up to 2 years) to reconcile the conflicts between work and family.

6.82 In sum, Taiwan government has played a significant role in supporting families and in creating a family friendly society. Besides, it has been very determined in making parent and family education available to its people through assuring trained family educators and developing a range of family and parent education resources and materials.

South Korea

6.83 South Korea puts a lot of emphasis on developing healthy families. It enacted a number of laws to support and protect families.

6.84 In 2004, it passed the *Framework Act on Healthy Homes* to help families so that they can satisfy the needs of their members and contribute to social integration.

- A Central Healthy Home Policy Committee was set up under the Prime Minister to deliberate on matters concerning the establishment and implementation of a Master Plan for Healthy Homes every 5 years to support families and to prevent their dissolution;
- Based on the Master Plan for Healthy Homes set up by the central government, local governments shall establish an implementation plan for healthy homes that and carry out tasks contained in it;
- Among others, the government needs to conduct education on healthy home, including education on preparation for marriage, parental education, education on family ethics, and education on the realization of family values and on home life.

6.85 In 2007, the *Act on the Promotion of Creation of Family-Friendly Social Environment* was in place to develop a family-friendly working environment, a family-friendly community environment, and a family-friendly culture. This act enables the government to:

- Develop a Family Friendliness Index and announce results to the public from time to time to keep track of the progress of their efforts in fostering family friendliness in the community
- Grant family-friendly certification to companies or public institutions with exemplary operation of family-friendly system in order to promote the creation of a family-friendly social environment

6.86 Since 1987, it enacted and revised from time to time the *Act on Equal Employment and Support for Work-family Reconciliation* to improve the quality of life of all people by supporting the reconciliation of work and family life for workers. Statutory measures for work-family reconciliation include:

- Maternity leave (90 days, 45 must be taken after child birth),
- Paternity leave (3 days to 5 days, first 3 days are paid, rest unpaid),

- Parental leave (up to 1 year, cannot be rejected by employer),
- Reduction of working hours for child care period
- Support for child care, and support for family care.
- support employees who return-to-work after maternity leave, paternity leave, childcare leave, or working hour reduction after their child care period

6.87 The government also takes an active role in promoting family values. These include the following measures:

- Certification of Family-friendly Corporation and Public Organization to give recognition to employing agencies with an exemplary family-friendly system on childbirth, childcare support, or flextime.
- Family Love Campaign to remind workers to depart their workplace on-time every Wednesday and encourage them to spend the spare time with their families.
- Family Day on every May 15 to raise the awareness of the public and private sectors about the importance of the roles and responsibilities of families

6.88 The Korean government also recognizes that parent education is important for both families and the country. In April, 2016, it announced the Parent Education Activation Plan which major contents include:

- Parent education for all basing on family-life cycle perspective;
- Support for vulnerable families;
- Mandatory parenting classes prior to divorce;
- Development of resources on parent education ;
- Campaign on parent education;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Plan.

6.89 In total, the Korean governments have taken an active role in instituting a range of measures to promote its national family values and the development of healthy families, and to help its people reconcile between home and work through a range of legislations and their legal provisions in the past three decades.

Interviews with Stakeholders

Aim and Method

6.90 Individual or focus group interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders to seek their views on the findings of this study, as well as on possible service and policy measures to support families and parenting in Hong Kong.

6.91 A total of 28 stakeholders were consulted, including government officers, CEOs of NGOs, representatives of the Family Council and Home-school Collaboration committee, employers, parents, and children.

Study Design

6.92 This study was credited for its multi-method design. It is said to be able to present both quantitative and qualitative data to address the different purposes of this consultancy study.

6.93 There is also the view that the design attempts to study the topic based on data collected in Hong Kong and those gathered from overseas. The study is said to be able to provide local and international visions on challenges to family and parenting

6.94 Informants with a medical and health background generally commented that the territory-wide survey is a cross-sectional design. As such, they commonly cautioned that results of the survey should be understood correlational rather than causal.

Creditability of Findings

6.95 Almost all stakeholder informants consider that the findings from the study are on the whole consistent with their observations and understanding about families and parenting in Hong Kong.

6.96 There are views that parenting in single-parent families was not given sufficient attention, and issues associating with parenting a single-child is relatively neglected and in need of further exploration in future study.

Parenting in Hong Kong

6.97 Based on findings of the study, stakeholder informants expressed the view that parenting is not easy in Hong Kong. They are of the opinion that a host of factors constitute an unfavorable family ecology for parenting.

6.98 Stakeholder informants who were employers quite strongly remarked that parenting had not prepared our young generation as successors, and failed parenting has turned out a generation of children with a lot of problems.

6.99 Some stakeholder informants expressed that family and parenting functions are now at stake in our community. Some even perceived a crisis in parenting and family functioning in Hong Kong.

Family, Parenting and Child Development

6.100 It is generally agreed that a well-functioning family is a pre-requisite for good parenting and positive child outcomes and that visionary parenting support needs to be conceived as part and parcel of the developing family policy in Hong Kong.

6.101 Well-functioning families benefit the Hong Kong society as a whole. Families with such qualities as love, respect for other family members, care, support and family unity are the cornerstone of the society.

6.102 Material well-being is equally important as psycho-emotional well-being for families. Besides, spiritual well-being is also an important quality of the strong and resilient families to tide over adversities.

6.103 Enhancing family functioning is not only considered as an overall strategy to improve parenting practices and child outcomes in general, but also a viable approach to achieving better family well-being and child outcomes in vulnerable families.

Services and Policies Measures to Support Families and Parenting

6.104 A strong and clear view was expressed to adopt the public health approach to improving family functioning and parenting practices in Hong Kong. This requires population-based services, enhanced service provisions for target populations, development and implementation of evidence-based programs, and inter-sectoral collaboration.

6.105 The life stage framework is widely adopted to organize family and parent education programs abroad. Most stakeholders mentioned the need to adopt this framework not only to organize these programs, but also to map them with services providers so as to avoid gaps and overlapping of responsibilities in service provisions.

6.106 As far as population-based programs are concerned, efforts should be targeted at common issues facing parents in Hong Kong. These may include but are not limited efforts to promote reflective parenting, to enable parents to know their kids in different developmental stages, to see their children positively and to listen to their children.

6.107 For enhanced service provisions for target populations, there are suggestions to especially attend to the family and parent education needs of the single-parent families, divorce couples, remarried families, and unmotivated parents with difficulties in parenting as a strategy to improve child outcomes in these families.

6.108 Having regard to what is done in the other three little Asian dragons, there is clear support to provide family and pre-parenthood education to young people through curriculum-based learning in the schools as well as in the university as a strategy to prepare young people responsible parenthood in the future.

6.109 There is a clear voice that support for families and parenting should be the collective responsibility of all parties. That said, the government is expected to assume a more leading role, including efforts to develop policies and supporting research to steer the development of family and parent education.

6.110 There is a suggestion that a Family Development Fund similar in operation to the Quality Education Fund be set up by government to support initiatives to improve family

well-being and parenting quality, including the development and operation of evidence-based family and parent education programs.

6.111 Recognizing that schools can be a source of stress to families and parenting in Hong Kong, stakeholders generally think it is necessary to reduce academic pressures on the students. To make schooling a happy experience for students, there is also a clear suggestion to review the school curriculum.

6.112 To make workplace more family friendly, some suggest employers to open their workplace to family members of their employees. Some suggest allocation from government fund to support SMEs to initiate family-friendly measures for their employees, or to provide tax rebate for this purpose.

6.113 Stakeholders consider it necessary to reclaim the function of community in supporting families and parenting. For this purpose, the mutual aid role of neighbors and neighborhood needs to be revitalized. Besides, religious organizations should be encouraged to take a more active role in supporting families and parenting.

6.114 A clear view was expressed that supporting family and parenting should not be left to the responsibility of any single party. It is important to embrace the concerted efforts of neighbors and neighborhood, schools and teachers, workplace and employers, government and NGOs to assure good parenting and positive child outcomes.

Discussion of the Findings

6.115 Findings gathered from different methods of data collection in this study inform us differentially and collectively on issues of importance in understanding parenting practices in Hong Kong. Taken as a whole, they serve to give us a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between parenting and child outcome. The aim of this part is to integrate and discuss these findings so that one can have a contextual understanding of parenting practices in Hong Kong.

6.116 The relationship between parenting and child outcomes is well affirmed by local and foreign research studies, whether parenting is conceptualized in terms of parenting goal (Cheah and Chirkov, 2008; Hastings and Coplan, 1999), parenting style (Steinberg, 2001; Fan and Chen, 2001; Piquart, 2015), parenting practices (Shek, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Booth, Rose-Krasnor, McKinnon, and Rubin, 1994; Chen, Liu, and Li, 2000; Qian and Xiao, 1998), or parenting behaviors (Gershoff, 2002; Harper, Brown, Arias and Brody, 2006; Kilgore, Snyder and Lentz, 2000). The territory-wide survey finds that parental warmth, parenting practice, and parenting stress were significantly associated with various child outcomes, including physical health, prosocial behaviors, psychological and behavioral problems, behavioral academic competence, self-esteem and academic self-concepts. For children in disadvantaged families, the survey findings also show that parenting moderates the adverse effects of low SES on child outcomes. These findings lend support to the significance of parenting in child development in Hong Kong.

6.117 Hong Kong is an international city where the East meets the West. Parenting practices in this special socio-cultural context has been a subject of local research for the past two decades. Parents in Hong Kong are said to be characterized by being restrictive, punishment-oriented (Chen, Dong and Zhou, 1997; Chen *et al*, 1998), demanding (Lin and Fu, 1990) but also warm at the same time (Chan, Bowes & Wyver, 2009). Qualitative data collected from focus group discussion with parent informants in this study reveal that parents in Hong Kong focus a lot on the academic performance of their children as their parenting goal, but at the same time are concerned with their happiness and health. As revealed in the focus group discussion, there are wide ranges of parenting practices in this cosmopolitan city. However, it is not uncommon to see parenting practices reflective of an approach characterized by parent-centeredness, customary use of commands, threats of violence, as well as psychological and physical aggression. Coupling these findings with a fair level of parenting competence and high level of parenting stress reported by them, parenting is not easy in contemporary Hong Kong.

6.118 The findings that parenting is associated with, even if not clearly impacting on various child outcomes suggests the need to support parenting to safeguard positive child development in Hong Kong, especially in the midst of the understanding that parenting is stressful and now at stake in our society. However, it has to be noted that parenting and family functioning are closely connected with each other. Based on what parent informants revealed in the focus group discussion, psycho-emotional family well-being like love, care, concern, communication, respect, support for each other are important indicators of family happiness. Intra-family factors like unsatisfactory family relationships, poor communication, lack of care and concern among family members, absence of spousal or extended family support are all contributory to stressful parenting. This in turn further aggravates the parent-child relationship and is counter-indicative of a well-functioning and happy family. Hence, parenting support is not enough to assure positive family relationship and child outcomes.

6.119 It may be necessary to distinguish family support and parenting support before a clear vision as to whether which of the two takes a primal importance in fostering positive child development. As pointed by Daly et al. (2015),

“family support and parenting support have distinct orientations and it is possible for each to exist without the other. Parenting support is the narrower of the two, being focused on parents and parental engagement and practices. It is therefore not necessarily oriented to the unit of the family or to wider familial considerations. Family support is broader, concerned with the family as a social unit and its ecological balance – the relationships and resource flows between members as well as how well the family is embedded within supportive networks. Hence, family support is oriented to family stability and general family functioning as against the more parent-centred objectives of parenting support.”(p.8)

6.120 The two concepts are distinct, yet closely related to each other. Both have a focus on the rearing of children, seeking to support or alter the conditions under which children are reared. However, due to its narrower focus, parenting support is only beneficial to those whose families are relatively functioning well, but who are mostly deficient in parenting functioning. For families in need of order to achieve a more favorable family environment for children's development, parenting support *per se* is not sufficient.

6.121 This is well illustrated by Matejevic, Todorovic, and Jovanovic (2014). In examining family functioning and parenting style in a sample of 544 university students, they find that patterns of family functioning are reflected in the parenting style, which implies that interventions targeting on parenting cannot significantly affect family functioning, of which parenting is only a part. Focusing on the strengthening of parenting skills should therefore be replaced by influencing the patterns of family functioning, in order for the effects of the intervention on the parental subsystem to be adequate and efficient. Often, support for family and support for parents work together to contribute to positive child outcomes. For instance, in their study on factors contributing to children's weight status in Taiwan and the United States, Chen and Kennedy (2004) found that families with clear communication, adequate behaviour control, plus structured parenting help to regulate their children's healthy behaviour. Similarly, a recent study by Matejevic, Jovanoic and Llic (2015) also found that potentiation of closeness and togetherness in family functioning have a clear protective function which, together with the contribution of fathers, is important for the development outcomes of adolescents with depressive orders.

6.122 It will be tempting to believe support for family and parenting is enough to provide a benign environment for child development. The developmental outcomes of children and young people are not solely determined by parents and the family. They are product of a complex set of interacting factors at individual, family and community levels. This view has been well illustrated by world renowned researchers like Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), James Garbarino (1992), and Jay Belsky (1984). The importance of the social ecology of families also finds significant support from what the parent and stakeholder informants shared in the data collection process. Many parent informants mourned at the loss of close and supportive neighbourhood which they experienced when they were children. Some shared how fortunate they were in having a helping hand from extended families, kinship and friends round. This is in sharp contrast to those who had to face all adversities alone in parenting children. Since support systems can serve as protective moderators of negative life stressors, enhancing adults' psychological well-being and parenting (Campbell & Lee, 1992; Dressler, 1985; Taylor, Casten, & Flickinger, 1993; Unger & Wandersman, 1985), it is worth the effort to enrich the supportive functions of neighbours and neighbourhood in Hong Kong.

6.123 From an ecological point of view, schools and schooling have a lot of influence on child development (Sylva, 1994). Besides, family-friendly work arrangements like flexibility in time and place of work, leave for family needs and supervisor support of working parents are related to positive parenting and beneficial to family (Este, 2004). From what parent informants shared in the focus group discussion, quite a lot of parenting stresses are

transmitted to the family system via schools through their plentiful homework and assessment driven learning. At times, parents also found it difficult to discharge their parental roles due to the lack of family-friendly employment practices. This is far from being the situation of a few isolated cases. The phenomenon is in fact rather prevalent in Hong Kong. As such, there is reason to believe that schools and workplaces have contributed to a stressful ecology of the families. To stop the negative spill-overs of the schools and workplace to the family, it would be necessary to look at how schools and families can work together to foster better child development and how the boundaries between workplace and families can be more flexible in facilitating each other in fulfilling their respective functions.

6.124 Lastly, it is necessary to point out that the government and its public policies are important part of the ecology embedding family, parenting and child development. They play a significant role not only in directly supporting families and parenting to foster positive child outcome, but also in shaping a friendly-friendly community conducive to family functioning, positive parenting and favourable child development. As the cornerstone of every society, the abilities of families and parents to turn out children and young people who can meet future challenges are at the core of social development. It is with this understanding that the role and efforts of governments in the UK and the other three Little Asian Dragons. Whether being more at the backstage to develop the needed infrastructural support like the UK government, or taking a more active role in instituting the policy and administrative framework to support family and parenting like the governments of the other three Little Asian Dragons, findings of the desktop survey tell us that governments in other places are a key player in supporting family, parenting and child development.

6.125 Thus far, it is sufficient to summarise at this point the following implications of this consultancy study based on the above discussions:

- Children are growing up in an increasingly complex social ecology comprising of their family, neighbourhood, significant social systems in their environment, and culture.
- Parenting is no easy task. Parent education and parenting programs can increase the competence of parents in bring up their children, but are not the sole answers.
- Family is the immediate context of children. A well-functioning family is indicated by and conducive to effective parenting of children.
- Support for families helps fostering well-functioning families and provide a benign context for parents to discharge their parenting roles.
- Supportive neighbors alleviate parenting stress. Re-inventing supportive neighbourhood facilitates an ecological fit between families and their community.
- Kins and extended families living nearby contribute a supportive neighborhood for a lot of families in Hong Kong. Same for good friends and neighbours.

- School is next to family as an important context for the children. Happy schooling experiences contribute to an ecological fit among children, family and the school.
- A family-friendly workplace is conducive to families while facing different kinds of challenges, which returns happy employees to the workplace.
- Government policies can help fostering a goodness of fit between families and their environment. They are also important constituents of the ecology of the families.

Recommendations

Support for Families

Recommendation 1: Families should be supported to assure family well-being, good parenting and positive child outcomes.

This study shows that families are now at stake. Family relationships and parenting are stressed by factors from within and outside the family. When families are at stake, parenting will be in trouble. There is a clear need of families for support in order to raise their level of functioning,

Recommendation 2: Family well-being should be an important goal in family support, as it is the basis of good parenting and positive child outcomes.

Findings show that material, psycho - emotional, and spiritual well-being are important to overall family well-being. They are the qualities underpinning happy families. Besides, they contribute to resilience of the families to tide over adversities.

Parent Education and Parenting programs

Recommendation 3: Parent education and parenting programs should be made available to parents in different stages of their life course.

Parenting makes a difference in various child outcomes. It moderates the adverse effects of low SES on child development. Parents face challenges in different stages of life and they can be helped to enhance their competence and confidence in parenting their children through parent education and parenting programs.

Recommendation 4: Reflective parenting should be promoted to help parents become more thoughtful and sensitive to their parenting practices.

Parenting can learn from their positive and negative experiences in parenting their children if they can reflect on their own parenting practices. It is helpful to equip parents with the readiness, sensitivity, and knowledge to know whether their parenting practices work and how they can be improved through self-reflection.

Recommendation 5: Child-centred parenting programs to help parents see their children more positively and listen more to them should be developed.

As this study reveals, most parents in Hong Kong are parent-centred. They are more inclined to see problems in their children and often disregard their views and voices. Parents can learn to become better parents by being more child-centred if there are parenting programs to help them to focus more on the concerns of their children. Likewise, they can choose schools which better fit their children if they are more aware of their needs.

Recommendation 6: Special parent education and parenting programs should be developed and delivered to parents with special parenting needs.

Parents in single-parent families, divorce families, new arrival families, and families of children with special needs are having rather differentially unique parenting problems. It is imperative that they be helped to fulfil their parenting roles more competently through parent education and parenting programs specially designed for them.

Framework for Family and Parent Education

Recommendation 7: The life stage approach should continue to be adopted as the framework for developing and organizing family and parent education programs.

The life stage approach is widely used in other places to provide the needed attitudes, knowledge and skills for good family life and parenting. This recommendation was in fact made in the *2012 Report on the Study of Family Education in Hong Kong*. The list of family and parenting programs listed in the Annex of the 2012 Report should continue to be developed and strengthened to meet the needs of families and parents in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 8: The public health approach should be adopted to plan and implement family and parent education programs.

The public health approaches ensures that efforts of primary prevention for the whole population, secondary prevention for the at-risk groups and tertiary prevention for families and parenting already with problems will work together to help families and parenting at all levels.

Recommendation 9: Family and parent education programs should be evidence-based and with proven effectiveness for their implementation

Effectiveness is a core issue in family and parenting education programs. For them to be able to improve family functioning and parenting, they must be effective programs. Like the other places in this study, the development and implementation of evidence-based programs is crucial to family well-being, good parenting, and positive child outcomes.

Recommendation 10: Territory-wide promotion and publicity efforts to foster positive values and attitudes towards family and parenting should be implemented.

At the primary level of prevention, population-based public education is needed to promote and publicize positive values and attitudes towards family and parenting. These promotional efforts should be territory-wide, theme-based and regularly conducted for them to create positive impacts on families and parenting in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 11: Enhanced education programme and support should be made available to families and parents at the risk of family functioning and parenting problems.

A stitch in time saves nine. Secondary level of prevention is necessary for families and parents who at risk of having problems in family functioning and parenting. In this regard, systematic screening of known risks in family functioning and parenting may help identify families and parents who are in need of the enhanced support.

Recommendation 12: Regular surveillance on the level of family well-being, parenting competence, and common issues facing families and parents should be conducted.

All primary and secondary prevention efforts in family and parenting education will be goal-driven and outcome-oriented. From time to time, surveillance of key outcome indicators of families and parenting will help charting the effectiveness of the prevention programs and provide feedbacks for their future implementation.

Recommendation 13: Inter-sectoral collaboration should be fostered in the implementation of family and parenting education programs.

Support for family and parenting is not the sole responsibility of any single sector. They are cross-disciplinary concerns. As such, they require the knowledge and efforts of different professions for their improvement. Different government departments, NGOs, and multi-disciplinary efforts are to be encouraged to support families and parenting in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 14: Family and pre-parenthood education should be made available to children and young people in schools and tertiary institutes.

The cultivation of positive attitudes and values towards family and parenting is to be done in the earliest possible stage of life. In this regard, as a part of the population-based prevention effort mentioned in Recommendation 9, it is good to use the schools as base to deliver family and pre-parenthood education to the children and young people. In fact, this is commonly practised in Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea.

Recommendation 15: Efforts to promote family as a life-long learning institution should be contemplated as a strategy to help families cope with the ongoing challenges to family life.

Family and parents face different developmental tasks in different stages of family life. Social changes also present them with ongoing challenges. People are not born to be happy family members and competent parents. They learn to be. It may be helpful to learn from the experience in Taiwan to promote the family as a life-long learning institution so that they can learn to face different challenges at different times.

Developing a Supportive and Family-friendly Social Ecology for Parenting

Recommendation 16: It is suggested that a review on existing school curriculum and policies be carried out to ensure that schools possess a happy learning setting for children, in order to create less parenting stress.

Most schools in Hong Kong are academically oriented. Teaching and learning is mostly assessment-driven. This study reveals that quite a lot of stress is spilled over from schools to families. It may be necessary to review the existing school curriculum and policies so that they can create happiness and not stress in learning. A happy schooling experience contributes to positive child outcomes and happy family life.

Recommendation 17: School operators should consider running different varieties of schools to suit the diverse learning needs of the children.

Children are different with respect to their strengths and learning needs. Mainstream schools do not fit all children. A family-friendly environment is one which is ecologically diverse. If there is better fit between schools and children's circumstances, parenting will be less stressful for parents.

Recommendation 18: More family-friendly initiatives to reconcile the potential conflicts between workplace and family should be in place.

Parents are often torn between the conflicting demands of work and parenting. Employers should be given more incentives to develop and implement family-friendly practices. In addition to the current Family-Friendly Employers Award Scheme, incentives like tax rebate or financial support of SMEs to initiate family-friendly employment practices can be contemplated.

Recommendation 19: NGOs, including religious organizations, should be encouraged to play a more active role in family and parenting support in the community.

By virtue of their service and religious missions, NGOs and religious organizations play a significant role in the well-being of people and their families. Religious organizations specifically help people and their families to attain spiritual well-being. As such, NGOs and religious organizations can be encouraged and mobilized to provide family and parenting support not only to their members, but also to other non-members in their neighbourhood.

Recommendation 20: Collective efforts should be made to reclaim the informal social support function of neighbours and neighbourhoods conducive to positive parenting.

Families and neighbours are commonly unconnected with each other in the neighbourhood. As such parents are isolated from informal social support in times of need and crisis. Quite a lot of parents are nostalgic of the closeness and frequent interaction with their neighbours when young. Supportive neighbours will buffer the stress experienced by parents when they are in difficult situations.

Recommendation 21: Kins and extended families living close to each other in the neighbourhood should be encouraged and facilitated to foster a supportive neighbourhood network for families and parenting.

Families in Hong Kong are rather detached from kinship and extended family support. However, this study finds that when living in the neighbourhood, kins and extended family

members can often provide convenient help in child care and parenting. Therefore, it is a good to encourage and facilitate kins and extended families to live in the vicinity so that support to the family is readily available to the family.

Role of the Government

Recommendation 22: The government should assume a leadership role in steering the development and implementation of family support and parenting education in Hong Kong.

Family and parenting are at a crossroad in Hong Kong. It is in need of leadership and a clear direction for development. To catch up with what the governments of the other 3 Little Asian Dragons have done, the Hong Kong SAR government should also take on a more central role in supporting family and parenting, both by assuming strong leadership and in providing a clear policy direction.

Recommendation 23: The government should consider setting up a Family Development Fund to support family and parenting education in Hong Kong.

For the development and implementation of family and parent education, funding has to be in place. It has been suggested the government can allocate funds to support initiative in supporting family and parenting by setting up a Family Development Fund akin to the Quality Education Fund. The Family Development Fund indicates a commitment of the government to supporting families and parenting in Hong Kong.

Recommendation 24: The government should take more initiatives to set a good model of family-friendly employer in Hong Kong.

Many SMEs are limited by financial and manpower constraints to implement family-friendly measures for their employees. Some employers being in a better position to do so may not do that because of their motive to maximize profit. This requires a change in the attitude and mind-set of the employers. The government can set a good model in family-friendly practices for other employers in Hong Kong.

Collective Responsibility and Concerted Efforts

Recommendation 25: Support for family and parenting education should be made collective responsibilities of all concerned parties in the society.

It takes a village to raise a child, that is, support for family and parenting should be a collective responsibility. While family and parent education should be made available to all people who need it, it is equally important to gear up the community so that all concerned parties are ready to support families and parenting. The government should take the lead to make this happen in Hong Kong.

Annex 1

Proportions of Children at Each Age and in Each District Participated in the Survey

District	Central & Western	Wan Chai	Eastern	Southern	Yau Tsim Mong	Sham Shui Po
Population	3.30%	1.80%	7.40%	3.80%	4.35%	5.30%
Our sample	3.25%	2.25%	6.36%	3.77%	4.70%	5.03%

District	Kowloon City	Wong Tai Sin	Kwun Tong	Kwai Tsing	Tsuen Wan	Tuen Mun
Population	5.25%	5.45%	9.05%	7.15%	4.70%	6.55%
Our sample	5.89%	5.96%	9.47%	7.15%	5.23%	6.69%

Age	Yuen Long	North	Tai Po	Sha Tin	Sai Kung	Islands
Population	9.80%	4.65%	3.65%	8.45%	6.80%	2.60%
Our sample	9.80%	4.70%	3.71%	7.81%	5.76%	2.45%

The number of children recruited for each district was proportional to the population size of children aged 3~14 in each district of Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). A paired sample t-test showed no difference between the sample and the population ($t(17) = 0.03, p = 0.97$).

Age	3	4	5	6	7	8
Population	7.65%	7.10%	7.55%	6.90%	6.85%	7.45%
Our sample	7.68%	7.15%	6.69%	7.02%	7.75%	7.68%

Age	9	10	11	12	13	14
Population	7.40%	8.90%	8.95%	9.40%	10.45%	11.55%
Our sample	7.55%	8.94%	8.54%	9.54%	10.66%	10.79%

The number of children recruited for each age range was proportional to the population size of children aged 3~14 in each district of Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2011). A paired sample t-test showed no difference between the sample and the population ($t(11) = 0.98, p = 0.92$).

Possible and Actual Score Ranges of Each Scale

	Possible Range	Paternal Actual Range	Maternal Actual Range
Parental Warmth The Parental Treatment Scale (PTS)	1~7	1.87~7	1~7
Parenting Practice Parenting Scale (PS)	1~7	1.56~5.38	1.75~5.21
Parental Behavioral Control Scale (PBC)	1~4	1~4	1~4
Parental Psychological Control Scale (PPC)	1~4	1~4	1~4
Chinese Parental Control (CPC)	1~4	1~4	1.08~4
Parental Stress Parental Stress Index (PSI)	36~180	36~180	36~159
Parent-child Relationship Reversed Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI)	12~60	12~60	22~60
Parent-child Relational Qualities Scale (RQI)	1~4	1~4	1~4
Parent Well-being Parent Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)	6~96	24~94	28~92
Behavioral and Psychological Problems Four subscales of Subscales of Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	0~40	7~40	9~40
Prosocial Behavior Prosocial subscale of SDQ	0~10	0~10	0~10
Self Esteem Self Esteem Scale	1~4	1~4	1~4
Academic Competence Behavior Academic Competence Scale (BAC)	1~4	1.6~4	1.8~4
Learning Motivation Inventory of School Motivation (ISM) (APASO)	1~4	1~4	1.59~4
Academic Success Academic self-concept Scale (ASC) (APASO)	1~4	1~4	1~4
Learning Competence Learning Competence (LCS) (APASO)	1~4	1~4	1~4
Physical Health of Children	1~5	1.8~5	1.8~5

Annex 3

Demographics Effect on Parenting & Parent-Child Relationship

Variables*		Local(L) / Immigrant(I)	First Marriage(Fi)/ Non-first marriage (N)	Both Parent (B)/ Single parent(S)	High SES (H)/ Low SES (L)	One child(O)/ More than one (Mo)
Parental Warmth	F	-	-	-	H	-
	M	-	Fi	B	H	O
	All	-	Fi	B	H	O
Parent-Child Relationship	F	-	Fi	-	H	-
	M	-	Fi	B	H	O
	All	-	Fi	B	H	-
Dysfunctional Parenting Practice	F	-	N	S	L	Mo
	M	-	N	S	L	Mo
	All	-	N	S	L	Mo
Parental Stress	F	-	-	-	L	-
	M	I	N	S	L	Mo
	All	-	N	S	L	Mo

* **F**: Father (Paternal). **M**: Mother (Maternal). **All**: Parental.

- : Results insignificant

¹Boxes that got a letter in it mean results are significant.

²Each letter indicates a higher score of the representing group on the specified variable than the counterpart group, e.g. for First Marriage (Fi)/Non-first marriage (N), “Fi” in the row of “Parental Warmth” and “M” indicates first marriage mothers showed higher scores on maternal warmth than did non-first marriage mothers, whereas “N” in the row of “Dysfunctional Parenting Practice” and “F” indicates non-first marriage fathers showed higher scores on paternal dysfunctional parenting practice than did first marriage fathers.

Annex 3 (cont.)

Demographics Effect on Child Outcomes

Variables	Age	Local(L) / Immigrant(I)	First Marriage(Fi)/ Non-first marriage (N)	Both Parent (B)/ Single parent(S)	High SES (H)/ Low SES (L)	One child(O)/ More than one (Mo)
Physical Health	3-8	I	-	-	-	-
	9-14	I	-	-	-	-
Behavioral & Psychological Problems	3-8	-	-	-	L	-
	9-14	-	-	-	L	-
Behavior & Academic Competence	3-8	-	-	-	H	-
School Motivation	3-8	-	-	-	H	-
Academic Self-concept	9-14	I	-	-	H	-
Learning Competence	9-14	-	-	-	H	-

- : Results insignificant

³Boxes that got a letter in it mean results are significant.

⁴ Each letter indicates a higher score of the representing group on the specified variable than the counterpart group, e.g. for the High SES (H)/Low SES (L), the “L” in the row of “Behavioral & Psychological Problems” and “3-8” indicates children aged 3-8 from low SES families showed higher scores on behavioral and psychological problems than did those from high SES families; the “H” in the row of “School Motivation” and “3-8” indicates children age 3-8 from high SES families showed higher scores on school motivation than did those from low SES families.

Annex 3 (cont.)

Associations between Parenting and Parent-Child Relationship and 3-8 Years old Child outcome

Variables* †	Warmth (↑ / ↓)			Parent-Child Relationship (↑ / ↓)			Dysfunctional Parenting Practice (↑ / ↓)			Stress (↑ / ↓)		
	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All
Behavioral & Psychological Problem	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Prosocial Behavior	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Physical Health	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Behavior Academic Competence	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
School Motivation	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

* **F**: Father (Paternal). **M**: Mother (Maternal). **All**: Parental.

† ↑ : Positive Association ↓ : Negative Association

⁵Boxes that got an arrow in it mean results are significant.

⁶Each arrow indicates the direction of the parenting and parent-child relationship variables, e.g. (↑) in the row of “Prosocial Behavior” and column of “Warmth” and “F” indicates a positive association between paternal warmth and prosocial behavior of children, higher paternal warmth was related to higher prosocial behavior of children; (↓) in the row of “Behavioral & Psychological Problem” and column of “Warmth” and “M” indicates a negative association between maternal warmth and children’s behavioral and psychological problem, higher maternal warmth was related to less behavioral and psychological problem of children.

Annex 3 (cont.)

Associations between Parenting and Parent-Child Relationship and 9-14 Years old Child outcome

Variables*†	Warmth (↑ / ↓)			Parent-Child Relationship (↑ / ↓)			Dysfunctional Parenting Practice (↑ / ↓)			Stress (↑ / ↓)		
	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All	F	M	All
Behavioral & Psychological Problem	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Prosocial Behavior	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Physical Health	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Learning Competence	↑	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓
Academic Self-concept	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	-	↓	↓	↓	↓
Self-Esteem	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

* **F**: Father (Paternal). **M**: Mother (Maternal). **All**: Parental.

† ↑ : Positive Association ↓ : Negative Association

- : Results insignificant

⁷Boxes that got an arrow in it mean results are significant.

⁸E Each arrow indicates the direction of the parenting and parent-child relationship variables, such as (↑) in the row of “Prosocial Behavior” and column of “Warmth” and “F” indicates a positive association between paternal warmth and prosocial behavior of children, higher paternal warmth was related to higher prosocial behavior of children; (↓) in the row of “Behavioral & Psychological Problem” and column of “Warmth,” “M” indicates a negative association between maternal warmth and children’s behavioral and psychological problem, higher maternal warmth was related to less behavioral and psychological problem of children.

Variable	Definition
Academic or Learning Competence	academic ability or psychosocial skills that are needed for academic performance
Academic Self-concept	children's attitudes, feelings and knowledge about their abilities, skills, appearance, and social acceptability in academic settings
Behavioral and Psychological Problems	a state generally associated with subjective psychological distress, disability, problems or symptoms occurs in an individual, and which is not part of the normal development of a culture
Child Well-being	a state of complete physical, mental and social development of a child and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
Chinese Indigenous Parental Control	parenting practices based on Chinese indigenous parental value and belief, such as the absolute obedience of the child, and unconditional respect for the parents
Family Well-being	a broad concept which covers various aspects of the living conditions of an individual or a family
Parental Behavioural Control	rules, regulations, and restrictions that parents have for their children
Parental Psychological Control	"parents' attempting to control a child's activities in ways that negatively affect the child's psychological world and thereby undermine the child's psychological development"
Parental Well-being	parents' general perception or assessment on their own quality of life as a results of parenthood
Parent-child Relationship	relationship or interaction quality between parent and child
Parenting Practice	goal-directed behaviors through which parents fulfill their parenting duties
Parenting Styles	a steady composite of beliefs and attitudes that provide context for parental behavior
Parenting Stress	the parents' perception or feeling that the changes and demands associated with parenting exceed their available resources
Physical Health	a condition of a person's body which is associated with fitness, symptoms, signs of disease, wellness, and ability to perform daily activities and physical roles in a society
Prosocial Behaviour	a social behavior that is expected to benefit other people or society as a whole, such as helping, sharing, donating, co-operating, and following rules and regulations
Self-esteem	a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth
School Motivation	learning motivation is about striving to learn and mastery.

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Invitation Letter to Schools

敬啟者:

香港家長親職實踐研究

兒童是將來社會的棟梁。他們的成長關係著整個社會的市民質素。其中，父母的管教方式和親職效能由關重要。社會有需要為香港現時的父母管教子女方式和狀況作探討，並提出適當的支援，作為保障兒童健康成長和發展和提升整體市民質素的策略。

受香港特別行政區中央政策組之委託，香港理工大學應用社會科學系並香港大學社會工作及行政學系的研究團隊現正進行一項題為『香港家長親職實踐研究』之研究，目的是希望探討香港家長在親職實踐上的經驗和看法，並其親職實踐對子女成長所產生的結果。我們希望可以通過這次研究的結果，為香港的親職教育和支援提供政策上和服務上的建議。

是次研究包括以家長和學生為對象的全港問卷調查。研究會以兩階段的類聚抽樣方式，隨機選出一個 2000 家庭的樣本，邀請樣本家庭中的父母和子女各自填寫一份不記名的問卷。填寫問卷約需時候 20-25 分鐘。在整個家庭完成填寫問卷後，我們會每個家庭奉送一張港幣 XX 元的超級市場禮券，以表答謝。

在第一階段的抽樣中，我們在全港 18 區按各區學生人數和年齡分布，每區選出 3-6 所學校（包括幼稚園/小學/中學）邀請參與研究。到第二階段，我們會在第一階段被抽出的學校中，再以隨機抽樣的方式每班級選出 5-7 名學生的家庭協助我們填寫一份長約三至四頁的問卷，搜集資料作為是次研究分析之用。

現懇請貴校參與是項研究，為香港的親職教育和兒童發展並未來香港社會的市民質素作出積極的貢獻。如貴校願意參與是項研究，請填寫好附錄一，並以附上之回郵信封於 X 月 X 日前交回研究員。我們將會與貴校負責的老師安排第二階段抽樣，抽出貴校學生的家庭參與是次調查。完成抽樣程序後，研究員將送上所需之問卷以分發給學生及家長填寫。

茲附上研究工作進程表乙份以供參考。如果你對是次研究有任何查詢，請賜電香港理工大學應用社會科學系陳沃聰教授（電話：2766 5726）或梁敏教授（電話：2766 4670）聯絡和查詢。敬祝教安！

此致

XX XXX 校長

香港理工大學應用社會科學系教授
陳沃聰

2015 年 X 月 X 日

致： 陳沃聰

香港理工大學應用社會科學系教授

由：

有關/事由：『香港家長親職實踐研究』研究

日期：2015年 月 日

回 條

1. 本校 願意 / 不願意 參與上述研究。
2. 就第二階段之抽樣及其後來的問卷分發及收集，請聯絡本校
老師 / 先生 / 小姐（電話：_____；電
郵：_____）

XXX 學校校長

2015年 月 日

Invitation Letter to Parents

敬啓者：

『香港家長親職實踐調查』研究

受香港特別行政區中央政策組之委託，香港理工大學應用社會科學系現正進行一項題為『香港家長親職實踐調查』之研究，目的是希望探討香港家長在親職實踐上的經驗和看法，並其親職實踐對子女成長所產生的影響。我們希望可以通過這次研究的結果，為香港的親職教育和支援提供政策上和服務上的建議。

是次研究包括以家長和學生為對象作全港性問卷調查。研究會以抽樣方式，隨機選出 2000 個家庭作樣本，邀請樣本家庭中的父母和子女各自填寫一份不記名的問卷（八歲或以下子女的問卷由父母代填）。填寫問卷需時 20 至 25 分鐘。在整個家庭完成問卷後，我們會向每個家庭送上一張港幣 XX 元的超級市場禮券，以表答謝。

問卷資料均受嚴格保密，日後的研究報告若有需要引用到這些資料時，也不會有辨認到你個人私隱的資料。按照香港理工大學的規定，參與這項研究必須是自願的。如果願意參與填寫問卷，請你們填寫背頁之參與研究同意書，並於一星期內連同已填寫好的問卷交回貴子弟的班主任。如果不願意參與填寫問卷，也請你們填寫背頁之參與研究同意書並於一星期內將整套文件交回貴子弟的班主任。

如果你對是次研究有任何查詢，請與香港理工大學應用社會科學系陳沃聰教授聯絡（電話：27665726）或與梁小姐聯絡（電話：34008376）。

此致

貴家長

香港理工大學應用社會科學系教授陳沃聰
二零一五年 月 日

Study Consent Form

參與研究同意書

致： 陳沃聰
香港理工大學應用社會科學系教授

有關： 「香港家長親職實踐調查」研究

日期： 2016年 月 日

回 條

我們明白這項研究的目的和對我們的要求，並 願意 / 不願意（請刪去不適用部分）參與上述研究。

學生姓名： _____ 學生簽署： _____

學生父親姓名： _____ 學生父親簽署： _____

學生母親姓名： _____ 學生母親簽署： _____

日期： _____

Appendix D

Table A: Scales used in Questionnaires for families with children aged 3~8

	Parent Variables	
Parental Warmth	The Parental Treatment Scale (PTS) Parent Questionnaire Part 2 Q. 1-15	
Parenting Practice	Parenting Scale (PS) Parent Questionnaire Part 4 Q. 1-30	
Parental Stress	Parental Stress Index (PSI) Parent Questionnaire Part 7 Q. 1-36	
Parent-child Relationship	Parent–Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) (subscale of PSI) Parent Questionnaire Part 7 Q. 13-23, 34	
Parent Well-being	Parent Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) Parent Questionnaire Part 3 Q. 1-16	
Child outcomes		
Behavioral and Psychological Problems	Subscales of Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Parent Questionnaire)	
	Emotional problems scale	Part 1 Q.3,8,13,16,24
	Peer problems scale	Part 1 Q.6,11,14,19,23
	Conduct problems scale	Part 1 Q.5,7,12,18,22
	Hyperactivity scale	Part 1 Q.2,10,15,21,25
Prosocial Behavior	Prosocial scale (subscale of SDQ) Parent Questionnaire Part 1 Q.1,4,9,17,20	
Physical Health	Health Questions Parent Questionnaire Part 7 Q. 37-41	
Academic Success	Behavior Academic Competence Scale (BAC) Parent Questionnaire Part 5 Q. 1- 15	
School Motivation	Inventory of School Motivation (ISM) (APASO) Parent Questionnaire Part 6 1-17	

Appendix D (cont.)

Table B: Scales used in Questionnaires for Families with Children Aged 9-14

	Parent Variables								
Parental Warmth	The Parental Treatment Scale (PTS) Parent Questionnaire Part 2 Q. 1-15								
Parenting Practice	Parenting Scale (PS) Parent Questionnaire Part 4 Q. 1-30 Chinese Control Child Questionnaire Part II Second Part 1-12 for both parents Parental Behavioral Control Scale (PBC), Parental Psychological Control Scale (PPC) Child Questionnaire Part II First Part 1-11 for both parents								
Parental Stress	Parental Stress Index (PSI) Parent Questionnaire Part 5 Q. 1-36								
Parent-child Relationship	Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI) (subscale of PSI) Parent Questionnaire Part 5 Q. 13-23, 34 Parent-child Relational Qualities Scale (RQI) Child Questionnaire Part II Last Part 1-17 for both parents								
Parent Well-being	Parent Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) Parent Questionnaire Part 3 Q. 1-16								
Child outcome									
Behavioral and Psychological Problems	Subscales of Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Parent Questionnaire)								
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Emotional problems scale</td> <td>Part 1 Q.3,8,13,16,24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peer problems scale</td> <td>Part 1 Q.6,11,14,19,23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Conduct problems scale</td> <td>Part 1 Q.5,7,12,18,22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hyperactivity scale</td> <td>Part 1 Q.2,10,15,21,25</td> </tr> </table>	Emotional problems scale	Part 1 Q.3,8,13,16,24	Peer problems scale	Part 1 Q.6,11,14,19,23	Conduct problems scale	Part 1 Q.5,7,12,18,22	Hyperactivity scale	Part 1 Q.2,10,15,21,25
	Emotional problems scale	Part 1 Q.3,8,13,16,24							
	Peer problems scale	Part 1 Q.6,11,14,19,23							
	Conduct problems scale	Part 1 Q.5,7,12,18,22							
Hyperactivity scale	Part 1 Q.2,10,15,21,25								
Prosocial scale (subscale of SDQ) Parent Questionnaire Part 1 Q.1,4,9,17,20									
Health Questions Parent Questionnaire Part 5 Q. 37-41 Child Questionnaire Part 4 Q. 5-9									
Academic self-concept Scale (ASC) (APASO) Child Questionnaire Part 3.2 Q. 1-5									
Learning Competence	Learning Competence (LCS) (APASO) Child Questionnaire Part 3.2 Q. 6-26								
Self Esteem	Self-Esteem (SE) Child Questionnaire Part 3.1 Q. 1-10								

Focus Group Consent Form

香港理工大學
應用社會科學系
《香港家長親職實踐研究》

研究邀請

受香港特別行政區政府中央政策組的委托，香港理工大學應用社會科學系並香港大學社會工作及行政學系的研究團隊們現正經行上述研究。目的是希望探討香港家長在親職實踐上的經驗和看法，並其親職實踐對子女成長所產生的影響。

我們懇請閣下參與一次約一個小時在香港理工大學校園舉行的焦點小組討論，內容將是圍繞你作為父母在親職實踐上的經驗和看法，並在親職過程中所遇到的困難，和親職實踐對子女成長所產生的影響。

焦點小組是以自由和開放的方式進行。訪談內容錄音將會被錄音/錄象，作為日後資料整理和分析之用。你參與此項研究是自願的，可以自動或在研究員的要求下退出研究而不會負上任何責任。

參與此項研究不會對你個人、家庭、生活及工作構成任何危害，所有你提供的資料均受嚴格保密，日後的研究報告若有需要引用這些資料時，也不會有辨認到你個人私隱的資料。你所提供的研究資料，在研究完成候的三年內將會完全銷毀。

如您想為這項研究作出任何查詢，你可以聯絡這項研究的首席研究員陳沃聰教授（電話：27665726；電郵：ssycchan@polyu.edu.hk）或梁敏教授（電話：27664670；電郵：leung.cynthia@polyu.edu.hk）。你也可以書面形式聯絡香港理工大學道德小組委員會秘書莫小姐 (Miss Cherrie Mok) 提出查詢（電話：27666378；電郵：cherry.mok@polyu.edu.hk）。

我們熱切期盼你會參與這次研究，為香港的親職實踐和兒童發展作出貢獻。

香港理工大學應用社會科學系陳沃聰教授

X年X月X日

香港理工大學
應用社會科學系

《香港家長親職實踐研究》

參與焦點訪談同意書

本人（以下署名）同意參與上述研究，

我明白會被邀請做一個約一小時的焦點訪談，訪談的內容是圍繞我作為父母在親職實踐上的經驗和看法，並我的子女成長所產生的結果。

研究員已經向我解釋我作為參與者的權利。我明白焦點訪談的內容會做錄音/錄像，作為日後資料整理和分析之用。

我明白我參與此項研究是自願的，我隨時可以自動或在研究員的要求下退出研究而不會負上任何責任。

我明白參與此項研究不會對我個人、家庭、生活及工作構成任何危害，所有我所提供的資料均受嚴格保密，日後的研究報告若有需要引用這些資料時，也不會有辨認到個人私隱的資料。

我亦明白我所提供的研究資料，在研究完成候的三年內將會完全銷毀。

簽名： _____

正楷姓名： _____

日期： _____

The Five PEIP Programs

FAST (Families and Schools Together) – originated in USA	
Age range	3 -18 years
Core program	8 weekly 2.5 hour evening sessions, school-based. Followed by two years of parent-led, school-supported, monthly booster sessions.
Session structure	Family tables including meal; peer activity (parent group; child group); parent-child activity, closing tradition.
Participants	Families with children in a year group in a school serving a multiple risk neighborhood. 10 families per hub, with school running 4 to 6 hubs at a time.
Facilitators	Five per hub - professionals from multiple agencies and parents of children in an older year group in the school; young people also in secondary schools.
Example aim	To increase protective factors for child
Incredible Years – originated in USA	
Age range	8-13 years (for the PEIP program)
Core program	Combines elements of the School Age BASIC program (12-16 sessions) with the ADVANCE parent program (9 sessions) making 18-22 sessions of 2-2.5 hours.
Session structure	Set out in manual – includes group discussion, video and live modeling, role play or small group rehearsal. Refreshments provided.
Participants	Group of 10-14 parents
Facilitators	Two group leaders – ideally drawn from professionals with postgraduate qualifications in fields such as psychology, psychiatry, social work, nursing
Example aim	Treatment and prevention of child behavior problems
Strengthening Families Program 10-14 (SFP 10-14) – originated in USA	
Age range	10-14 years
Core program	Seven weekly 2 hour sessions. Followed by four optional booster sessions beginning 6-12 months afterwards.
Session structure	Set out in manual – parallel groups for parents and young people, family activities. Includes refreshments and may include a meal.
Participants	Up to 12 families
Facilitators	At least three facilitators (one for parents, two for young people) – drawn from all professional groups and parents who have previously attended the program.
Example aim	To decrease alcohol and drug use during adolescence
Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) – originated in USA	
Age range	3-18 years
Core program	Thirteen weekly 3 hour sessions. Session structure Set out in manual – includes facilitator modeling, role play, lectures, discussion.
Participants	Group of 8-15 parents
Facilitators	Co-facilitation model – practitioners from any occupation, ideally with Level 3 qualifications and experience and expertise in working with parents
Example aim	To promote protective factors for child
Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) – originated in Australia	
Age range	0-16 years
Core program	For PEIP, typically Level 4 Group or Group Teen – eight sessions: five as 2-hour group sessions, three as 30 minute telephone calls.
Session structure	Set out in manual – includes presentations, video demonstrations, discussion
Participants	10-12 parents
Facilitators	One facilitator required – basic professional training required - typically drawn from psychologists, social workers, teachers, family counselors, nurses
Example aim	To enhance parents’ knowledge, skills, confidence