

Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) Survey on Challenges Faced by Families in Hong Kong

Background

Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) conducted a survey on challenges faced by families in Hong Kong in June to September 2007.

Objectives of the survey were to provide a baseline on the current situation in HK and as a basis for similar survey in other countries in the region to facilitate cross country comparison on family challenges.

Methodology

With the technical support from Public Opinion Programme (POP) of the University of Hong Kong, the survey was conducted by telephone interviewing randomly selected samples. Phase I was carried out in late June 2007 and "exploratory open-ended" questions were used to explore the general public's concern over family issues. 263 respondents were successfully interviewed. Findings of the first phase of survey were compiled and used to formulate the questions and items to be covered in the second phase conducted in late August 2007. 512 respondents were successfully interviewed. Respondents were requested to grade the named challenges faced by families as very common / common / average / not common / very not common. For the demographic information of respondents, please refer to the Appendix.

Summary of Findings

Please refer to the attached Appendix for the summary of findings.

The most common challenges faced by families in Hong Kong are as followed:

1. Long working hours / heavy workload was the most common problem respondents or their friends or relatives are facing with, indicating that unbalance between work and family life is common among Hong Kong people. Long working hours and heavy workload cause damages to family and doubtlessly, respondents would normally have little time and energy to play their roles in the family. Consistent working hours and heavy workload bring immense stress, and would seriously affect the individuals' physical and mental health.
2. Most respondents' families or their friends / relatives worried about how they could do their best to nurture their children as well as provide their children with best educational opportunities. It seems that most Hong Kong people could see the importance of education to the next generation, while feeling helpless to get any support.
3. Some respondents would also feel stressful due to illness or suspected that they might have problem with physical or mental health.

Recommendations

1. Creating Positive Family Dynamics

Creating an environment for family well-being enables family members to contribute more to the family. While harmonious family life is the base for constructing a harmonious society, we strongly recommend the Family Council to be established by the Government to consider the suggestions from different sectors of the society, take appropriate measures to ensure that social policies are in line with the goal to enhance family well-being in Hong Kong.

Relieving the stress faced by individuals may allow family members to contribute more of their time and energy to perform their unique and important role in the family, which is the fundamental factor for family well-being, creating positive family dynamics in facing individual and family difficulties. We would suggest the Government, employers and employees to collaborate for better family dynamics through policy formulation and legislation, e.g. setting the highest daily working hours, reinforcing family-friendly policy and providing flexible working environment and conditions. When employees can attain work life balance, work productivity may be optimized and thus enhances the competitive power of the company. Every individual should also try his/her best to sustain the quality of family life, learn to cope with different stresses and to maintain a harmonious family life.

2. Nurturing the next generation

Educating and nurturing the next generation is not simply a concern of individual families but a shared interest of the society. The Government should ensure that voices of the parents are heard when developing education policies.

Collaboration between teachers, parents and students is the key to success. Parent education should be strengthened and popularized, with more training for teachers to promote the psychological well-being of students and to facilitate their healthy growth and development.

3. Physical and Mental Health

An affordable medical system should be secured for every family member to meet their health care needs. The Government should evaluate, review and improve the existing medical provision, to ensure that every member in the community will be protected and cared for, with no worry over their economic situations.

Furthermore, each individual has the responsibility of taking good care of oneself and to maintain a healthy living. A good physical well-being can certainly lower the public medical cost and ensure a better life for the whole family.

4. Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA)

CIFA is established to support and enhance family well-being in the Asian region through sharing of clinical experiences and advocating formulation of public policies in support of families. It provides a platform for trans-disciplinary collaboration with the ultimate goal to strengthen family functioning and promote family health in the region while contributing to the body of knowledge in relationship science in the international arena.