

中學生校外生活素描

A Study on the After School Life of Secondary Students in Hong Kong

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SUMMARY REPORT

1 Introduction

The rapid change in the consumer business environment, the information technology in daily life as well as the ecology of the media industries in the past years or so has had a tremendous impact on shaping the moral standards and value premises of the youth in Hong Kong. The implantation of moral values, usually obtains through formal education in schools, may also come as informal education through the interaction of youth with their family members or social contacts during their activities after school. What and how the secondary students of Hong Kong interact with family members or the media industries, has given rise to much controversy and expressions of deep concern. Through an opinion survey of students as well as a telephone survey on parents whose children are studying in secondary schools, we hope to increase our understanding of the issue. Only then can we make suitable directions for the formulation of policies and services in the future.

2. Methodology

Two questionnaires, one for the parents and one for the secondary students, are employed for this study. For the survey on parents, Standard Public Opinion Program (SPOP) sampling procedures developed by the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong were adopted. Telephone numbers were first randomly selected from the telephone directories as seed numbers. Subsequently, by employing the plus / minus single digit method, additional numbers were generated from seed numbers to capture possible unlisted numbers. All numbers were then mixed at random to give the final telephone sample. The telephone survey was conducted between ____ and ____ November 1999. A total of 318 parents whose children are studying in secondary

schools were successfully interviewed. The response rate was _____ per cent, whereas the standard error was within _____ per cent.

For the survey on secondary students, it was conducted through a self-administered questionnaires distributed in classes through teachers and school social workers of schools from various districts. Secondary schools were invited to assist and convenient sampling was employed. A total of 1,091 secondary students, ranged from Form 1 to Form 7, were successfully interviewed. The survey was conducted between _____ November to _____ December 1999. The analysis contains a synthesis of both the quantitative data from the parents and the secondary school students, as well as an extensive review of the literature.

3. A Typical Profile of The After School Lives of Secondary Students in Hong Kong.

As revealed by the survey data, secondary school students spend most of their after school hours in doing homework or revision (%), seconded by watching television or listening music (%) and making phone calls (%) is ranked third. In terms of venue, most of the students indicated they stayed the longest hours in school (%), shopping malls in local areas (%), libraries or reading rooms (%). The pattern appears similarly for weekend time except more respondents claimed that they would also stay at the homes of schoolmates or friends (%). The findings also showed that only a small amount of the respondents claimed that they spend much time in joining school activities (%), working as volunteers (%) or participating in community or youth centres (%).

Do secondary school students like to stay home? More than three-quarters (77.5%) of the students said that they did. Furthermore, a significant portion (78.5%) of the respondents claimed that they have assisted in household affairs of the family. These domestic works ranged from room keeping, cleaning the floors or miscellaneous articles for the home, washing dishes and so forth.

However, what are the qualities of their family life, or specifically their interactions with the parents? As revealed by the survey data, the average time is only 15 minutes per day for students to talk with their fathers and only 30 minutes per day to talk with their mothers. Most students perceive fathers as the key figures in taking care of their daily lives as well as in implanting rules and

norms of lives in the society. Mothers, on the other hand, are recognized more on the roles of sharing feelings and emotions of their lives.

Despite the majority (85.5%) of the students agreed that “being a good parents are not easy in today’s society”, a significant number (78.3%) of the respondents do expect parents are the party to take one step further to improve parent-child relationships. While near three-quarters of the students agreed “parents need to know more on the friends of children” (72.6%) and “children should report where they are after school” (72.4%), a significant portion of the respondents (39.7%) opined that “parents do not trust their children if they ask children to report where they are.” Almost half of the students (49.9%) believe “children do not share feelings and emotions with parents are symbols of alienation”. About one-fifth of the respondents (20.7%) think the other way round that “parents do not spend enough time with children is an indicator that they do not treasure their children.”

These sentiments were not really picked up by parents as revealed from the survey on parents. Much less parents (13.9%) than children (39.7%) agreed that “parents do not trust their children if they ask children to report where they are.” In fact, an overwhelming majority of the parents (98.1%) did believe that “children should report to parents where they are after school.”

The findings from the survey on parents also showed that, despite more than four-fifth of the parents (83.6%) claimed they understand well about their children, their parenting skills seemed far from adequate. More than three-fifth of the parents (60.5%) expressed that they could find help from nowhere when there are quarrels among themselves with their children.

With respect to the social contacts and the environment where the students are situated, the findings of the survey on students revealed that the media they contact most are television (75.3%), newspapers (39.6%) and magazines and comic books (32.3%). However, a significant portion of the respondents (27.6%) mentioned that they are never in touch with internet. For newspapers, the most popularly read are ranked in the order as Eastern Newspaper (%), Apple Daily (%) and The Sun (%). The news and the entertainment sections are rated lowest in the dislike scale, implying that these sections are in general well received by the student readers. For magazines, the findings revealed that the popular categories are students magazines (%), consumers magazines (%)

and entertainment and TV magazines (%). For comic books, the most popular categories are Japanese stories (%), fighting stories (%) as well as “kong-wu” (江湖) and “ku-wack” (古惑) stories (%).

It is also noted that a significant number of students (70.7%) quite disagree that the news in the media of Hong Kong is credible and reliable. On the other hand, opinions of the students towards the television programs in Hong Kong are split. A bit over half of the students (53.7%) do not disappointed by the TV programs while the other 46.2% have the opposite views.

In terms of parental guidance, the survey on the parents revealed that more than half of the parents never or seldom deliberately or actively arrange their children to watch suitable television programs (56.3%) nor provide guidance in selecting or reading suitable sections of newspapers and magazines (55%). A significant majority of the parents (79.5%) also never or seldom arrange after school activities for their children. On the other hand, the survey on the students also revealed that the majority of the parents (88.2%) would not bother children to read the newspapers bought at home no matter what sections they might come across.

With respect to using computers, more than half of the students (54.9%) do not agree that they should be accompanied by parents when using internet, indicating a big contrast to the views of parents that 80.2% do agree parents should accompany with children when using internet.

4 Discussion

4.1 Children on average do stay 6 hours at home after school for weekdays and 9 hours for weekends, but many of them can only have 15 minutes conversation with fathers and 30 minutes with mothers. This big contrast is an alarm to the quality of family relationship for many families in Hong Kong.

It was revealed by the findings of the students' survey that more than three-quarters (77.5%) of the students said that they did like to stay home. It is also noted that students on average do stay 6 hours at home after school for weekdays and 9 hours for weekends. However, many of these students can only have 15 minutes conversation with their fathers and 30 minutes with their mothers. This big contrast indicates that the quality of the family relationship for many families in Hong Kong is far from reasonable, albeit satisfactory.

What happens for this phenomenon to appear? What are the reasons behind? Are parents really too busy that they are unable to talk more than 30 minutes a day to their children? Or the concept of "quality of family relationship" is not yet recognized by most of the families in Hong Kong?

Some more relevant findings of the survey may shed some lights to the answers of the above questions. As revealed from the students' survey, most students perceive parents as the key figures more in taking care of their daily lives, or implanting moral rules and standards of norms for the society. However, with respect to the sharing of feelings and emotions, many students would turn to their schoolmates or personal friends rather than their parents for conversation. This unsatisfactory quality of family relationship may partly be explained by the general authoritative figures of parents, but the real reasons behind seem coming from lack of understanding or guidance rather than the parental stereotypes. This big contrast is an alarm to the quality of family relationship for many families in Hong Kong.

4.2 Despite the majority of the parents claimed that they know very well on the physical where about of their children, less than half of the parents dare to admit that they understand the thoughts

and feelings of their children psychologically.

The findings of the parents' survey revealed that the majority of the parents claimed they understand very well on the physical whereabouts of their children. An overwhelming majority of the parents (95.2%) said they know very well on the academic performance of their children. Parents also said that they know where their children go for the holidays (92.4%), how their children spend time in the holidays (90.3%), what television programs their children usually watch (89.9%), how their children spend time after school (89.4%), which newspapers and magazines their children read (85.2%), as well as where their children stay after school (83.6%). While parents seem in general to comprehend very well on the physical whereabouts of their children, the case is totally different with respect to their understanding on the psychological aspect of their children. Less than half of the parents (46.9%) dare to admit that they understand the thoughts and feelings of their children psychologically. In another question of the parents' survey, 16.4% of the parents simply claimed that they did not understand their children.

The above findings match quite well an impression that parents nowadays in the affluent society of Hong Kong are able to take good care on the material aspects of their children, but not as good in the parental roles of sharing feelings and providing emotional support to their children. This further illustrates that the quality of family relationship is needed for improvement.

4.3 The majority of the parents had experienced conflicts with their children. Academic performance of children, disobedience of children, and parenting styles of the parents are the top three popular choices for reasons of conflicts among parents and children. Unfortunately, sixty per cent of the parents turn to nowhere for seeking help when facing conflicts with their children.

As revealed by the survey data, the majority of the parents (81.1%) had experienced various degrees and frequencies of conflicts with their own children. Among the many reasons mentioned, academic performance of children (32.0%), disobedience of children (32.0%), and parenting styles of the parents (17.0%) are the top three popular choices for reasons of conflicts among parents and

children. The result is not a surprise as parental styles are very important and crucial for parent-child relationship. A research conducted earlier by the Education Department also revealed that different parental styles might results differential effects on the acceptance of the children. The most acceptable parental style will be caring-and-authoritative style that provides a balance on emotional support and guidance to the children.

And yet, despite conflicts among parents and children are frequent, the ability of parents in handling these crises seems far from adequate. As indicated from the parents' survey, sixty per cent of the parents expressed that they turn to nowhere for seeking help when facing conflicts with their children. This clearly implies that parents should either be better informed of relevant community resources that are useful in parenting or simply be better equipped with knowledge on effective parenting.

4.4 In addition to the unsatisfactory quality of family relationship, the quality of parenting in terms of guidance, advice or life exposure arrangements are also far from satisfactory. Without proper and active guidance from parents, many of the secondary school students are in fact at-risk in the social environment where they grow up.

Despite a vast majority of the parents (97.0%) indicated that they had the opportunities to have face-to-face communications with their children, more than half of the parents said they never or seldom take any deliberate actions to make arrangements for the daily lives of their children. These can be examined by various examples such as lack of guidance in watching suitable television programs (56.3%), lack of guidance in selecting or reading suitable sections of newspapers and magazines (55%), or never and seldom making arrangements on the after school activities for their children (79.5%). At the same time, the survey on the students also revealed that the majority of the parents (88.2%) would not even bother to know what sections their children might come across to read for the newspapers they bought at home.

For those parents who claimed that they had made arrangements on the after school activities for their children, many of the activities are athletic or artistic

in nature. These include painting classes, karate classes, football group, piano classes or English and Mathematics classes. The focussed nature of these activities, coupled with the lack of proper guidance from the parents in daily lives events, may in fact jeopardize the grow of the students in this complicated social environments.

4.5 Students are exposed to social environments that are flooded with magazines, newspapers, and social contacts which all emphasize on entertainment, consumption, and leisure. Furthermore, students are widely indulged in reading comic books that are fully occupied by Japanese love stories, fighting stories, “kong-wu” (江湖) stories as well as “ku-wack” (古惑) stories. A long-time immersion into this type of social environment poses much limitations on the growth in perspectives of the young people.

As revealed from the survey data of the students, the media they contact most are television (75.3%), newspapers (39.6%) and magazines and comic books (32.3%). It is noted that students are exposed to social environments that are flooded with magazines, newspapers, and social contacts which all emphasize on entertainment, consumption, and leisure. For example, the newspapers most popularly read are ranked in the order as Eastern Newspaper (%), Apple Daily (%) and The Sun (%). At the same time, the news and the entertainment sections are rated lowest in a given “dislike scale”, implying that these sections are well received by the student readers in general. The findings also revealed that the most popular categories of magazines are tailor-made fun magazines for students (%), magazines for consumers on food and leisure (%), and entertainment and TV magazines (%). For comic books, the most popular categories are Japanese love stories (%), fighting stories (%) as well as “kong-wu” (江湖) and “ku-wack” (古惑) stories (%). The wide circulation and market occupancy of these newspapers, magazines, comic books, as well as entertaining television programs has created a social environment that are fully occupied by messages on “love”, “fighting”, “kong-wu” (江湖) as well as “ku-wack” (古惑) . A long-time immersion into this type of social environment poses much limitations on the growth in perspectives of the young people.

4.6 The survey data shows that students are quite social minded in general. They are positive to volunteerism as well as able to play a critical view towards the media credibility and reliability. Still, more of the students inclined to recognize that getting good academic performance are more important than gaining extracurricular or social experiences. How to strike a better balance between academic and non-academic activities in school as well as after school lives will be a key concern in the context of education reform.

As revealed from the survey data, many of the students are quite social minded in general. When asked on their views on volunteerism, more than two-third of the students (69.1%) agreed or even strongly agreed that it would be more gain than lose for doing volunteer works. At the same time, students are also able to play a critical view towards the media credibility and reliability. It is noted that a significant number of students (70.7%) disagreed that the news in the media of Hong Kong were credible and reliable. At the same time, a bit less than half of the students (46.2%) disappointed by the quality of television programs while the other 53.7% have the opposite views.

Yet, the enthusiasm of the students in social participation seems greatly affected by their views towards academic performance. Near sixty per cent of the students (59.3%) inclined to recognize that getting good academic performance are more important than gaining extracurricular or social experiences. This view is further reinforced by parents whose survey data showed that 67.3% of the parent respondents think it so.

The fact seems to be that students are not indifferent to social participations, but indeed inhabited by environment they are situated that much emphasis are placed on academic performance. The views of the parents like this, which in term would inevitably influence the views of students to accept it. How to strike a better balance between academic and non-academic activities in school as well as after school lives will be a key concern in the context of education reform.

5. Recommendations

In view of the above discussion, the Federation will recommend:

- 5.1 In view of the fact that almost half of the parents admit that they do not understand the thoughts and feelings of their children, that sixty per cent of the parents turn to nowhere for seeking help when facing conflicts with their children, that parental guidance, advice or life exposure arrangements for children are far from satisfactory, that children can only have 15 minutes conversation with fathers and 30 minutes with mothers despite children are on average do stay 6 hours at home after school for weekdays and 9 hours for weekends, the Federation recommends that “Total Quality Family Relationship” (TQFR) should be advocated for all families of the society in Hong Kong. To this end, the Federation recommends that the Government to consider setting up Centres for Effective Parenting so that resources in helping the needed parents can be further coordinated and delivered.**
- 5.2 The concern of how to encourage students to participate more widely in social affairs needs to be addressed. The fact that students are not indifferent to social participation, but indeed inhabited by environment they are situated that much emphasis are placed on academic performance should be further investigated. The other fact that students are widely indulged in reading comic books that are fully occupied by Japanese love stories, fighting stories, “kong-wu” (江湖) stories as well as “ku-wack” (古惑) stories, as well as exposed to social environments that are flooded with magazines, newspapers, and social contacts which all emphasize on entertainment, consumption, and leisure should also be noted. The Federation recommends the Government to play a more active role in devising developmental and participatory social programs for secondary school students so that a better balance between academic and non-academic activities in school as well as after school lives can be addressed in the context of education reform.**