

Parental Perspectives on Child Neglect in Hong Kong

Final Report

[A consultancy study commissioned by the Central Policy Unit
of the Hong Kong SAR Government]

Centre for Social Policy Studies, Department of Applied Social Sciences
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Parental Perspectives on Child Neglect in Hong Kong

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行政摘要

研究背景及目的

本港有關疏忽照顧兒童的情況愈趨普遍，近年更出現不少因獨留兒童在家而導致兒童傷亡的個案，引起社會關注。為加強對兒童的保護，並就解決和預防疏忽照顧兒童問題上提出相關政策和服務建議，香港特區政府中央政策組遂委託香港理工大學於 2010 年 6 月進行一項「從家長角度看疏忽照顧幼童研究」，其研究目的旨在：

1. 探討香港家長對幼童(年幼子女)基本需要之看法；
2. 剖析香港家長對構成疏忽照顧兒童的看法；
3. 研究涉及疏忽照顧兒童的家庭之需要以及採取個案介入的標準；
4. 探究香港家長有關疏忽照顧兒童的經驗和現實情況；
5. 探討家長在預防和解決疏忽照顧兒童問題上的角色；
6. 提出相關政策和服務建議，從而更有效處理及防止疏忽照顧兒童問題。

研究方法

研究小組透過搜集「疏忽照顧兒童」的相關文獻，參考和比較七個國家/地方，包括美國、英國(英格蘭及威爾斯)、澳洲(新南威爾斯)、南韓、新加坡、台灣和香港，在處理和預防疏忽照顧兒童問題上的經驗和政策。(詳見報告書第二及第三章)

研究小組根據量化研究方式，於 2010 年 8 月 18 日至 10 月 30 日期間進行全港性電話調查，成功訪問了 1,046 個育有至少一名十六歲以下子女的家長，了解他們對兒童基本需要、疏忽照顧兒童以及介入個案的看法。

此外，研究小組於 2010 年 11 月至 2011 年 2 月期間，成功邀請了 13 位相關社工和 27 位育有至少有 1 名 16 歲以下子女的家長，其中 10 名曾有疏忽照顧兒童經驗，進行個別的深入訪談，以獲取更詳細的資料以作質性分析。

研究結果

文獻回顧 (詳見報告書第三章)

透過文獻回顧和分析七個國家/地方經驗得知，現時處理和預防疏忽照顧兒童問題所採取的主要措施包括：強制性通報疏忽照顧兒童個案機制 (mandatory reporting)、家庭支援措施、履行家長責任協議 (parent responsibility contract)、頒布保護及照顧兒童法令、針對父母和監護人干犯疏忽照顧兒童罪之罰則以及強制式家長教育 (mandatory parent education)。至於以上措施應用在香港是否有助家長甚至家庭解決和預防疏忽照顧兒童問題則有待進一步的研究。

全港性電話調查（詳見報告書第四章）

根據電話調查的結果，疏忽照顧兒童是本港較為常見的問題。10.4%接受訪問的家長指出他/她們或他/她們的配偶曾疏忽照顧其兒童（詳見本報告 3.4.1 末段）。

受訪家長普遍認為家長需充分地滿足兒童的基本需要，這可從他/她們對以下各項需要（以 5 分為滿分計）的高度評價看出：有足夠衣和食(4.52)、被尊重和被肯定(4.54)、被照顧和關懷(4.70)、被保護(4.64)、接受適切教育(4.59)和生病時接受適當治療(4.73)（詳見本報告 3.4.3.3）。

受訪家長亦普遍認為家庭屬提供兒童基本需要的重要場所。以 5 分為滿分計，家長責任(parental responsibility)於本研究所涵蓋各方面的兒童需要上均錄得超過 4.5 的平均分（詳見本報告 4.3.4）。

在四種不同的疏忽照顧兒童類型中，家長於身體疏忽照顧(physical neglect) (4.21)的定義性傾向(definitional tendency)最高，於情緒疏忽照顧(emotional neglect) (3.09)的傾向最低。這說明了受訪家長對身體疏忽照顧的認知程度(parental awareness)最高，而對情緒疏忽照顧的認知程度則最低（詳見本報告 4.3.5）。

深入訪談（詳見報告書第五章）

頗多受訪家長承認曾試過疏忽照顧年幼子女，但他們意識到問題可導致的嚴重性後，很快從錯誤中改正過來，因此未有對子女做成很大影響（詳見第 5.3.1 段）。涉及疏忽照顧兒童個案的訪問中，研究小組發現導致問題的原因是多方面的，因此需要多方共同努力去解決及預防（詳見第 5.3.1.1 至 5.3.1.8 段）。雖然受訪家長對介入疏忽照顧兒童問題有不同意見，但他們普遍傾向支持由社工介入一般疏忽照顧兒童個案，而對警方介入則有所保留，除非該涉案家長嚴重失責，否則不贊成警方介入家庭事務（詳見第 5.3.2.1 a 及 b 段）。

在預防疏忽照顧兒童問題上，受訪社工認為應發展並加強非正式支援網絡（例如親友和鄰里）作為保護兒童的第一道防線（詳見第 5.3.3.3 a 段）。透過提供相應的社會服務，支援一些有需要的家庭，使他們不會因為家庭的困境而疏忽照顧兒童（詳見第 5.3.3.3 b 段）。對於涉及一些非嚴重危險和傷害的疏忽照顧兒童個案的家庭，受訪社工認為需要為他們提供社會服務支援外，亦必須緊密地監察和跟進情況（詳見第 5.3.3.3 c 段）。最後就是面對一些較為嚴重/對兒童構成危險的疏忽個案，則必須啟動保護兒童程序，嚴肅處理（詳見第 5.3.3.3 d 段）。受訪社工亦提及實際協助疏忽照顧兒童家庭時會遇到不少困難，特別是面對一些欠責任感和缺乏積極性的家長（詳見第 5.3.3.4 段）。

建議

根據是次研究之結果及分析，研究小組現向香港特區政府中央政策組及家庭議會提出有以下建議：

有關對疏忽照顧兒童問題的回應

- a. 孩子應享有的基本需要包括：有足夠衣和食、被尊重和被肯定、被照顧和關懷、被保護、接受適切教育和生病時接受適當治療的需要。這種價值觀也是香港社會的普遍期望。
- b. 家庭應被視為提供和滿足兒童基本需要的重要場所；而家長則有責任去滿足孩子的各種基本需要。
- c. 政府有責任保障兒童的基本需要能獲得滿足；政府同時必須為有困難的家庭提供協助。
- d. 透過公民教育和家庭教育向大眾推廣正面和負責任的親職方式，預防疏忽照顧兒童問題。
- e. 透過公民教育和家庭教育，讓公眾認識到疏忽照顧兒童並非單指生理上的疏忽照顧，亦包含情緒上、教育上以及醫療上的疏忽照顧，而且各種形式的疏忽照顧均同樣會對孩子構成傷害。
- f. 鼓勵透過多方參與和合作，包括親友、鄰舍、專業社工和警方等多方共同努力和攜手合作，為疏忽照顧子女和有潛在疏忽照顧子女危機的家庭的援助提供協助。
- g. 就回應兒童的需要上，以親友、鄰舍、專業社工和警方等多方共同努力和攜手合作，為有需要的兒童，提供支援和照顧。
- h. 發揮非正式支援網絡的互助功能，在社區推廣並加強助人自助的精神，以預防疏忽照顧兒童的問題。
- i. 強化社會服務中家庭支援服務的功能，協助有需要的家庭解決管教問題、照顧子女問題、婚姻問題或經濟問題，從而避免疏忽照顧兒童問題的發生。
- j. 就 i 項有關家庭支援服務功能對預防疏忽照顧兒童問題的成效作定期檢討。
- k. 檢討警方介入疏忽照顧兒童個案的角色，並且應該審慎考慮警方介入作為處理疏忽照顧兒童個案的最後手段。

對於有潛在疏忽照顧兒童問題的家庭

- l. 早期發現此類家庭，可透過參與家長/家庭教育，認識並加強父母在家庭生活中不同階段的親職效能。
- m. 出現管教問題、照顧子女問題、婚姻問題或經濟拮据情況的家庭，有潛在疏忽照顧兒童的可能，因此，以上問題的出現應作為介入疏忽照顧兒童個案的第一個門檻，在此情況下，應為這類家庭提供適切的援助如家庭支援服務和專業輔導，以防止疏忽照顧兒童的發生。
- n. 協助偶爾出現疏忽照顧子女，而情況未有對兒童構成傷害的家庭，是介入疏忽照顧子女家庭個案的第二門檻。除了為他們提供社會服務支援外，如有需要，應緊密地監察和跟進情況，以決定是否需要按「處理虐待兒童個案程序指引」。
- o. 持續地疏忽照顧子女的家庭，無論有否對兒童構成傷害，是介入疏忽照顧子女家庭個案的第三門檻，這個時候應根據「處理虐待兒童個案程序指引」，啟動保護兒童程序。

對於涉及疏忽照顧的不負責任家長

- p. 兒童法庭可更廣泛的根據香港法例第 213 章《保護兒童及青少年條例》中第 34 條(1)(c)的授權，命令兒童或少年的父母或監護人辦理擔保手續，來處理不負責任家長。
- q. 參照澳洲新南威爾斯於 1998 年的《兒童及青少年法(照顧及保護)》之中的做法，修改香港現有的保護兒童及青少年條例，加入類近澳洲新南威爾斯的「家長責任協議」的條款，增強社工與不合作家長的法律權力。
- r. 修改現有的《保護兒童及青少年條例》，賦予法庭對疏忽照顧子女的家長頒布接受強制式家長教育的法令。

對於觸犯法例的家長之強制式家長教育

- s. 針對適當的個案，觸犯法例的家長應該被給予機會從檢控及相關的法律程序分流，接受警司警戒計劃及參與家長教育。在這方面，警司警戒計劃的授權及憲章應該更改以使上述建議中的做法可行。
- t. 因疏忽照顧兒童而觸犯法例的家長之中，合適的家長可獲裁判官判令簽保守行為，並需要參加強制式家長教育；因此，需就香港法例第 227 章《裁判官條例》第 62 條款作出修，授權裁判官對有關父母頒布接受強制式家長教育的法令。

- u. 被判罪的家長可以接受簽保守行為的判令及需要參加強制式家長教育；故此，香港法例第 227 章《裁判官條例》第 36 條及第 221 章《刑事訴訟程序條例》第 107 條（與其他相關的條例）應該予以修改，授權法庭對有關父母頒布接受強制式家長教育的法令。
- v. 對於被判罪成的家長，現時的感化服務應該被更廣泛地運用；透過現行香港法例第 298 章《感化犯人條例》中可以加入特別的規定，要求家長接受家長教育。

其他建議

- w. 非政府機構及市場應在發展不同類型的家長教育活動上扮演更積極的角色，以配合法庭頒令家長教育和輔導的發展。
- x. 政府部門（包括社會福利署、警方）、非政府機構及司法機構應有更緊密的合作，以促進香港推行法庭頒令家長教育服務的發展。

Executive Summary

Objectives of the study

For better protection of children from being neglected, and improved service and policy responses to neglectful families in Hong Kong, the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong SAR Government commissioned this consultancy study to the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in June 2010 with the following objectives:

1. to identify the views of parents on the basic needs of children in Hong Kong;
2. to study the views of parents on what constitutes a child neglect case in Hong Kong;
3. to study the views of child protection professionals on the needs of the neglectful families and the thresholds for intervening in the neglectful families;
4. to explore the experiences and realities of neglectful families in Hong Kong, with particular reference to the antecedents of the child neglect problem that appeared in the family;
5. to identify in what ways and under what circumstances families can play a role in solving the child neglect problem, both at the prevention and intervention levels;
6. to make recommendations at service and policy levels on the management and prevention of the child neglect problem in Hong Kong.

Methods of the Study

This study has revealed some of the major literature on child neglect for the purpose of this study (Chapter 2). Besides, it has conducted a desktop survey on 7 countries/places to examine their responses to child neglect, including the United States, England and Wales, New South Wales of Australian, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Chapter 3).

In addition, a telephone survey was conducted between 18th August, 2010 and 30th October 2010 to examine the views of Hong Kong parents on the needs of children, child neglect, and intervention in child neglect. Totally, 1,046 parents with at least one child under 16 were interviewed on the telephone.

Besides, indepth interviews were conducted with 10 neglectful parents, 17 non-neglectful parents, and 13 social workers between November 2010 and February 2011 to explore in greater details about their views on the child neglect problem and intervention that is needed for families of child neglect.

Finding of the study

Desktop survey (Chapter 3)

A number of responses to child neglect are identified, for instance, mandatory report of child neglect, family support, parent responsibility contract, statutory care and protection of the children, punitive measures on offending parents and caregivers, and mandatory parent education. These measures are worthy of further examination with respect to their relevance to helping neglectful parents and families in Hong Kong .

Telephone interview (Chapter 4)

The findings of the telephone suggest that child neglect is a rather common problem in Hong Kong because 10.4% the parent respondents reported that they or their spouse have neglected their children (last paragraph of Section 3.4.1).

Parents have a general expectation that children's basic needs are to be adequately met by parents in the family because they rated highly when they were asked to affirm the following needs of children on a 5-point scale: food and clothing (4.52), respect and recognition (4.54), care and concern (4.70), protection (4.64), education (4.59), and medical care (4.73) (Section 3.4.3.3).

Parents also generally consider that family has the prime responsibility in responding to the various needs of the children. Their average ratings of parental responsibility on a 5-point scale are over 4.5 in all areas of children's needs covered in this study (Section 4.3.4).

Among the four types of child neglect, parents have the highest definitional tendency in physical neglect (4.21) and lowest in emotional neglect (3.09). The findings suggest that parental awareness of child neglect is highest in physical neglect and lowest in emotional neglect (Section 4.3.5).

For parents and families with difficulties in meeting these needs, they are to be adequately supported in discharging their responsibilities, including help by relatives, assistance by neighbors, and social work interventions. Social work intervention is

commonly preferred (3.68), while police intervention is the least preferred form of intervention (2.88) in neglectful families according to the parent respondents (Section 4.3.6).

Indepth Interviews (Chapter 5)

A lot of parents admitted to have neglected their children before, but their children do not suffer significantly because these parents learn from their mistakes (Section 5.3.1). Cases of neglectful families show that the problem is multi-causal and requires collaborative efforts for its prevention (Section 5.3.1.1 to 5.3.1.8). Though their views vary, parents generally welcome assistance of the informal system in milder forms of child neglect. Where intervention of the formal systems in neglectful families is needed, parents prefer social work intervention and are hesitant of police intervention except in cases of irresponsible parents (Section 5.3.2.1 a and b).

Social workers suggested that supportive informal network be developed and strengthened as the first line of child neglect prevention (Section 5.3.3.3 a). Families with difficulties in a range of problems that can lead to child neglect should be supported with help from social services (Section 5.3.3.3 b). Families with child neglect not involving significant risk or serious harm should be closely monitored with the support of social services (Section 5.3.3.3 c), while cases with significant risk or serious harm to child, child protection procedures should be initiated (Section 5.3.3.3 d). Social workers also considered it difficult to help neglectful parents, especially those who are irresponsible and unmotivated (Section 5.3.3.4).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for the consideration of the Central Policy Unit and the Family Council of the Hong Kong SAR Government:

Pertaining to responses to the child neglect problem

- a. The needs of children in areas of food and clothing, respect and recognition, care and concern, protection, education, and proper medical care, are to be adequately met in line with the general expectations of the Hong Kong community.

- b. The families should be respected as an important site in meeting children's needs, and parents be responsible for fulfilling their children's needs and seeing to it that the various needs of their children are being adequately fulfilled.
- c. The government has the responsibility to see to it that the needs of children in these areas are adequately met, and to assist parents and families with difficulties to look after these needs of the children.
- d. Public and family education be widely used as an instrument to promote positive and responsible parenting as a strategy for preventing child neglect in the general population.
- e. Public and family education programs should target at raising public awareness of the non-physical forms of child neglect so that the community knows all forms of child neglect are equally injurious to children.
- f. Assisting neglectful families be made a multi-party endeavor, including the collaborative efforts of the relatives, friends, neighbors, social workers, and police officers.
- g. For children in need, the collaborative efforts of relatives, friends, neighbors, social workers, and police officers be focused on meeting the needs of children to child neglect.
- h. The mutual help functions of the informal support networks be developed, strengthened, and publicized in the community as a strategy to combat child neglect at the prevention level.
- i. The parent and family support functions of social services be strengthened to help families with problems of parenting, child care, marital conflicts, financial hardships to prevent them from developing into child neglect.
- j. The parent and family support functions of social services be constantly evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing problems of parenting, childcare, marital conflicts, financial hardships from developing into child neglect.
- k. The role of police intervention in child neglect cases be reviewed; in the meantime, the intervention of police in neglectful families be judiciously exercised, if not being a last resort in neglectful families.

Pertaining to families at risk of child neglect

- l. Early identification of parent with difficulties and strengthening parenting competence at different stages of the family life cycle through parent/ family education.
- m. Problems in parenting, child care, marital problem, financial hardships should be taken as the threshold for intervention; families with these problem should be given appropriate assistance and family support and counseling to stop the problems from developing to child neglect.
- n. The presence of snap-shot non-injurious child neglect in families be taken as a second threshold; for these families, besides social service support, the families should be closely monitored to see if child protection in accordance with the *Guide* is needed.
- o. Whether injurious or non-injurious, the presence of consistent child neglect be taken as a third threshold; for these families, child protection procedures in accordance with the *Guide* should be followed.

Pertaining to unresponsive but non-offending parents

- p. Section 34(1)(c) of the Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance, Chapter 213 of the Laws of Hong Kong be more widely used by juvenile courts to deal with the irresponsible parents.
- q. The Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance be amended to include provisions of ‘parent responsibilities contracts’ like that of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 of New South Wales, Australia.
- r. The Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance be amended to empower the court to order neglectful parents to receive mandatory parent education.

Pertaining to mandatory parent education for offending parents neglect

- s. Where appropriate, parents be diverted from prosecution to join the police discretionary caution scheme and attend compulsory parent education; in this regard, the mandate and charter of the police discretionary caution scheme be revised to make this recommendation possible.
- t. Suitable offending parents be subjected to magistrate bind-over and be required to attend parent education programs; in this connection, Section 62 of the of the

Magistrate Ordinance be revised for the purpose of empowering magistrates to make an order for parent education.

- u. Convicted parents be subjected to a bind-over sentence and be required to attend parent education programs; in this connection, Section 36 of the of the Magistrate Ordinance and Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (and other related ordinances) be revised to empower the courts to make an order for parent education.
- v. Existing probation services be more widely used in cases where parents are convicted of child neglect; convicted parents be required to attend parent education program through insertion of a special requirement in the probation order made under Chapter 298 of the Law of Hong Kong.

Other recommendations

- w. The NGOs and the markets should play a more active role in developing different varieties of parent education programs and provide them to the parents as a form of court-ordered treatment.
- x. Closer collaboration among the government departments (including the SWD and police), the NGOs, and the Judiciary be fostered in implementing court-ordered parent education in Hong Kong.

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Chapter 1

Objectives of the study

In June, 2010, the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong SAR Government commissioned the study entitled “Parental Perspective on Child Neglect in Hong Kong” to the Centre of Social Policy Studies of the Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The objectives of the study are :

1. to identify the views of the parents on the basic needs of children in Hong Kong;
2. to study the views of the parents on what constitutes a child neglect case in Hong Kong;
3. to study the views of the child protection professionals on the needs of the neglectful families and the thresholds for intervening in the neglectful families;
4. to explore the experiences and realities of neglectful families in Hong Kong, with particular reference to the antecedents of the child neglect problem that appeared in the family;
5. to identify in what ways and under what circumstances families can play a role in solving the child neglect problem, both at the prevention and intervention levels;
6. to make recommendations at service and policy levels on the management and prevention of the child neglect problem in Hong Kong.

The study consists of three parts. The first part is a desktop search of the literature and the legal cum procedural framework of handling child neglect cases in different places/countries. The second part is a telephone survey of 1,034 parents with a child in Hong Kong. The third part is an indepth interview with 9 neglectful parents, 17 non-neglectful parents, and 13 child protection professionals.

This report presents the objectives, methods, findings and recommendations of this consultancy study.

Chapter 2

Background and Literature Review

2.1 The Neglect of Child Neglect

When Dr. Henry Kempe and his colleagues first discovered the “battered child syndrome”, child neglect assumed a lower profile because the professionals and lay communities were then more concerned with child abuse. As a matter of fact ‘child neglect’ has always been tied with ‘child abuse’ in the embracing phrase ‘child abuse and neglect’. The subsuming of neglect into child abuse reflects the prioritization of the problems in the daily work of child welfare professionals (Swift, 1995). According to Rose and Meezan (1993), efforts to differentiate child neglect from child abuse began in 1964 when Young distinguished between abusive and neglectful parents in her landmark study of families known to child welfare agencies. It is generally considered to be an act of omission in contrast to child abuse, which is an act of commission (Giovannoni, 1989).

Though it has been gradually accepted that child neglect is a separate form of child maltreatment, it has become commonplace in the field of child maltreatment to recognize the “neglect of neglect” in child abuse literature and research (Wollock and Horowitz, 1984). Since Wollock and Horowitz (1984) pointed out the “neglect of neglect” in child abuse literature and research, more than twenty years passed, there is still the observation that neglect is the poor relative of research on child maltreatment (Mayer, Lavergne, Tourigny, & Wright, 2007), and that “research on child maltreatment has a hole in the middle, where the concept of neglect should be filled in.” (Garbarino and Collins, 1999, p.11).

The paucity of research efforts on child neglect is echoed by a similar tolerance of the child neglect problem by child care practitioners. A number of reasons have contributed to the relative inattention to the child neglect problem by child welfare professionals. These include the belief that neglect does not result in serious consequences, hesitation to judge parents involved in poverty-related neglect, reluctance to become involved in child neglect due to the size of the problem, preoccupation with other forms of child maltreatment believed to be more compelling, and ambiguity and vagueness regarding what constitutes child neglect (Sullivan, 2000).

2.2 Child Neglect as a Problem

Knowledge concerning child neglect has progressed slowly, in part impeded by the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes neglect, and by a dearth of valid and reliable measures to assess this inherently complex phenomenon (Dubowitz, et al., 2005, p.173)

Child neglect deserves public and professional attention because it has the highest incidence rate among all types of maltreatment in the United States; in 2004, nearly 550,000 children were neglected (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2006). It is also the most prevalent reason for family intervention in child protective services (Slack, Holl, Altenbernd, McDaniel, & Stevens, 2003). In a territory-wide survey carried out by the University of Hong Kong between December 2003 and August 2004, about 36% of child respondents indicated they had ever encountered neglect by their parents, and about 27% of them indicated that they had encountered neglect by their parents during the 12 months prior to the survey (Chan, 2005). Obviously, neglect is present in a significant portion of the child population, be it in the US or in Hong Kong. There is an impending need to address child neglect in order to help the large number of children at risk of the problem.

2.3 Culture and Child Neglect

Lacking a clear and consistent definition, child neglect has been a challenging concept for both practitioners and researchers (Taylor and Daniel, 2005). Once seen only as 'dirty children in dirty homes', the concept of child neglect is relative and has varied over time (Rose and Meezan, 1993). The concept of child neglect does not only vary with respect to time, it is also different for different cultures. At one time, whether prayers are said at meal times and at night are indicators of possible neglect (Minty and Pattinson, 1994). This view, of course, is no longer acceptable nowadays. However, the issues of cultural consideration in the understanding of child neglect remains.

The core of the conceptual challenge to child neglect, as many have pointed out, lies in the heterogeneity of the phenomenon and the inherent difficulty of specifying what constitutes omissions of care (Straus & Kantor, 2005). Child neglect definitions involve cultural consideration because cultural norms concerning neglectful behaviors vary from society to society. Child care practice acceptable to a culture or subculture may be

considered by others to be harmful to children. Differences in economic and social characteristics and values of urban and rural communities may affect the perception of people in these communities on child neglect and its seriousness (Goodvin, Johnson, Hardy, Graef, & Chambers, 2007). On account of these considerations, therefore, the definition of child neglect must take into consideration whether the omission is an idiosyncratic deviation from one's cultural practice (Cowen, 1999).

2.4 Child Neglect and Deprivation

The concept of child neglect is inevitably related to poverty. Child neglect often arises from conditions of social and economic deprivation. More than a century ago, its resolution was pursued by middle-class reformers who were both sympathetic to and frightened by the young victims and their families. Therefore, child neglect owes its existence to a set of class relations that allowed middle class reformers in the earlier stages of industrial capitalist development to apply legal sanctions to particular parents who occupied marginal positions vis-à-vis the larger economy (Swift, 1995). The notion of child neglect has been understood as the application of middle-class values as interpreted by professionals on lower-class families (Dubowitz et al, 1998).

2.5 Children's Need and Child Neglect

The understanding of child neglect is often tied with the notion of children's needs. Despite the lack of a consistent definition, there is broad agreement that children are neglected when they are deprived of minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, and nutrition. In other words, child neglect is often defined in terms of parental failure to provide for these basic needs of their children. This is best epitomized in the words of Dubowitz, Black, Starr, and Zuravin (1993) who succinctly stated that "child neglect occurs when the basic needs of a child are not met, regardless of the cause" (pp.22-23). Similarly, for Minty and Pattinson (1994), "[t]he neglect must spring either from a failure to appreciate children's basic needs or an inability to act on that appreciation, in spite of having the material wherewithal to do so." (p.738).

2.6 Parental Responsibility and Child Neglect

Besides children's needs, the role of parents as caregivers has been closely bound with the concept of child neglect. Neglect is an issue of parental environment, not individual incidents (Gaudin, et al. 1996). According to Cantwell (1980), child neglect involves inattention to a child's needs by parents or caretakers in areas of health,

education, stimulation, physical care, discipline, nutrition, safety, and emotional nurture. Zuravin (1989) also defined neglect in terms of parental behaviors, such as refusal or delay in providing health care, mental health care, supervisory neglect, abandonment or desertion, failure to provide a permanent home, personal hygiene neglect, housing hazards, housing sanitation, nutritional neglect, and educational neglect. Minty and Pattinson (1994) defined neglect as persistent failure to meet a child's essential needs by omitting basic parenting tasks and responsibilities to such an extent that the child's well-being and development are severely affected. Succinctly summarized in the words of Gil (1970), child neglect is "a breakdown in the ability to mother." (p.31).

2.7 Child Neglect – Some Common Definitions?

As can be seen, there are constant challenges inherent in defining neglect as cultural norms shift over time (Straus & Kantor, 2005). Apart from cultural norms, however, there is disagreement on how to judge the presence of child neglect. Two sets of criteria are commonly referred to, namely, the harm standard and the endangerment standard. The former falls back on the harm experienced by the child as a result of neglect, while the latter considers it important to assess the risk to which the children are exposed in defining child neglect (Sedlack & Broadhurst, 1996).

Definitions of child neglect do not only vary with respect to time and culture. It also varies according to its focus. There is stark difference between broad and narrow definitions of child neglect, with broad one focusing on environment conditions such as poverty, and narrow ones emphasizing more on parental responsibilities and blameworthiness (Stowman and Donohue, 2005).

Notwithstanding the ambiguities and complexities of the concept of child neglect, significant number of children worldwide is suffering the consequences of neglectful behaviors by their parents or caregiver. In the more socially and economically developed countries and places where government agencies or NGOs are able to do something to preventing the problem through supporting parents and families, child welfare agencies and professionals have come up with operational definitions of child neglect to guide child protection. These will be reviewed in the next part of this report.

In sum, child neglect is generally understood as a failure to meet children's needs by parents or caregiver. However, due to the intricacies of the concept, the understanding of child neglect requires sensitivity to the social and cultural contexts of the families

involved. For protection of children being neglected, evidence of harm or substantial deficit in development, coupled with the ability of the parents to avoid the harm resulting from neglect are often necessary in justifying intervention in families. In the light of these considerations, therefore, although child neglect can occur on a continuum from mild to severe forms, the notion of ‘evidence of significant harm’ usually implies that the neglectful incident is a rather serious one. Alternatively, if it is of milder forms, it is usually more chronic in nature for harm to accumulate to a point that significant harm or the risk of significant harm to the child(ren) being neglected is evident.

2.8 Types of Child Neglect

Rose and Meezan (1993) reviewed the state statutes in the US and the relevant literature in the 1970s and 1980s and identified the following 9 components of neglect :

- inadequate food
- inadequate clothing
- inadequate shelter
- inadequate supervision
- inadequate medical care
- inadequate emotional care
- inadequate education
- exploitation, and exposure to unwholesome circumstances.

In the US, child neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Child neglect can be physical, medical, educational, and emotional (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). However, the US is a federal nation. There are variations in defining child neglect among the States. Within the minimum standards set by the *Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)*, each State is responsible for providing its own definitions of child neglect. Therefore, each State in the US has its own classification of child neglect.

In Hong Kong, child neglect is officially classified into physical neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect and medical neglect (Social Welfare Department 2007) :

- Physical neglect is the most common form of child neglect. It can be defined as harm or endangerment resulting from inadequate nutrition, clothing, hygiene, and supervision (Sedlack & Broadhurst, 1996). Based on the *Procedural Guide For Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007*, examples of physical neglect

include : failure to provide necessary food, clothing or shelter, failure to prevent physical injury or suffering, lack of appropriate supervision or left unattended.

- Emotional neglect is difficult to define, detect and confirm because what is essential for children's development is not easily agreed upon (Berrick, 1997; Brassard & Hardy, 1997). In general, it includes failure to provide adequate affection and emotional support, and cases of psychological neglect are commonly marked by parents who are detached and uninvolved with the children (Sedlack & Broadhurst, 1996; Cowen, 1999). Based on the *Procedural Guide For Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007*, examples of physical neglect include ignoring a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care.
- Education neglect refers to the failure to comply with laws requiring school attendance, failure to provide an approved home curriculum, consistently permitting truancy without legitimate reasons, as well as an inattention to special education needs (Cowen, 1999). Based on the *Procedural Guide For Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007*, education neglect in Hong Kong may include such parental behaviors as failure to provide education or ignoring educational needs arising from a child's disability.
- Medical neglect is indicated in refusal to allow or provide needed care for diagnosed condition or unwarranted delay or failure to seek timely and appropriate medical care for a "serious" health problem, through extraordinary inattention to the child's health care needs. It is sometimes subsumed under the category of physical neglect, as is in the case of the National Incidence Study. In Hong Kong, it is an independent category of child neglect. Based on the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007*, medical neglect simply refers to failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment.

2.9 Effects of Neglect on Children

A review of the literature and research show that the immediate and long-term consequences of child neglect on the development of the children are not to be neglected (Hildyard and Wolfe, 2002). These consequences include severe, deleterious effects on children's physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral development listed as

below:

- In the first place, failure of parents to provide for the basic physical and psychological needs of the children often leads to impediments in physical growth and even nonorganic failure to thrive (Drotar, Eckerle, Satola, Pallotta, & Wyatt, 1990).
- Secondly, neglect in early life is found to be detrimental to subsequent cognitive development that continues to handicap children's academic functioning in later years (Kendall-Tackett and Eckenrode, 1996).
- Thirdly, it hampers the social development of the children. There was a negative relationship between neglect and children's social competence (Herrenkohl, Kerrenkohl, Egolf, and Wu, 1991).
- Fourthly, neglected children were found to have more behavioral problems at home and at school (Wodarski, Kurtz, Gaudin, and Lowing, 1990), and child neglect is a good predictor of delinquency (Starr, McLean, Keating, 1991).
- Fifthly, neglect is associated with child fatality. In different studies carried out in the US, around 40 percent of child death cases related to child maltreatment was the result of neglect (Gaudin, 1999).

A lot of studies have highlighted significant developmental problems in children who have experienced inadequate, neglectful parenting. The first few years of children's lives are particularly crucial and sensitive periods for later development. The inadequacy of early brain development has permanent and irreversible consequences, leading to problems in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Although learning can take place in any stage of life, it often is more difficult for neglected children who were deprived of certain types of early stimulation in the first three years of their life (Erickson & Egeland, 2002). Besides, the negative consequences of neglect are linked with various undesirable outcomes children experience in the child welfare system, like higher rates and longer period of out-of-home care, and less likelihood of family reunion with parents after foster care placement (Rosenbery and Robinson, 2004). Beyond doubt, efforts should be made to prevent child neglect through early identification and intervention in families at risk of the problem.

2.10 Neglectful Families

As a group, neglectful families are identified by the absence of adequate care to their children. According to DePanfilis (1996), families which are socially isolated, experience loneliness, and lack social support may be more prone to neglect. Stevenson (2007) demonstrated that seriously neglectful families usually exist in conditions of quite severe poverty and social isolation. Citing the work of Ghate and Hazel (2002, p.96), she pointed out that

“the odds of not coping well in poor environments were particularly increased for parents if they had greater numbers of dependent children, had a difficult child, exhibited a tendency to depression... reported high levels of personal and family difficulties or were parenting alone... For each additional problem experienced by parents, the chances of not coping were almost doubled.... It gives us a vivid indication of how problems can pile up to reduce parents’ sense of being able to manage their lives.’

As far as the functioning of neglectful families are concerned, the findings of Gaudin, Polansky, Kilpatrick, & Shilton (1996) are consistent with those of another study by Gaudin (1993) in that neglectful families had more family conflicts and less expression of feelings, were less organized, more chaotic, less verbally expressive, showed less positive and more negative affect than non-neglect families. However, Gaudin et al. (1996) found that neglectful families are not less cohesive, but the findings of Gaudin (1993) revealed that they are less cohesive and psychologically close among their members.

It will be grossly wrong to assume that neglectful families are an undifferentiated group. According to Gaudin, Polansky, Kilpatrick, & Shilton (1996), there were wide differences on the measures of functioning among neglectful families. They identified three distinct types of neglectful family functioning, each of which requires different interventions to improve parental-family functioning. Similarly, Wilson, Kuebli, & Hughes (2005) in their study found that neglectful mothers are not a homogenous group. They identified 5 clusters of maternal behaviors associated with child neglect, each of which has a different implication for clinical intervention.

Based on this brief review of neglectful families, it is enough to say that neglectful families differ from each other by type. Assessment, intervention, and services to neglectful parents and families need to attend to their unique experiences and realities.

2.11 ‘Thresholds’ for Intervention in Neglectful Families

One of the reasons for the ‘neglect of neglect’ is that there is less shared understanding of what constitutes the problem and how it should be responded to (Gough and Stanley, 2007). Judgments about child neglect are often value-laden. They are inevitably dependent on the standards about what constitutes adequate care. The situation is further complicated by the fact that child neglect is often chronic in nature. It is unlikely a single incident, but more “a process or a way of life, characterized by unremitting low-level care for children and often an ingrained sense of hopelessness within the family” (Tanner and Turney, 2003, p.26). The long-term and chronic nature of child neglect easily contributes to the growth of what Tanner and Turney (2003) termed as “defensive practice”, by which they mean professional capacity for reflection and initiative is stifled, and responses become routinized, tolerance with the problem increase and an inertia of professional response develops.

For these reasons, deciding when a particular situation has reached a point that warrants professional intervention in child neglect cases is necessary – is never easy and straightforward. There have been different attempts to develop policies and practices that facilitate the identification of child neglect cases for the purpose of early intervention. In the United States, the emphasis is on risk assessment tools designed to improve the quality and consistency of decision making (English, 1999). In England and Wales, however, the focus is more on the development of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for use by the practitioners. Currently, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health et al., 2000) has been used for identifying vulnerable children, including neglected ones.

A concept that has widely used and discussed in professional assessment of child neglect in the UK literature has been that of “threshold” (Stevenson, 1998, 2007; Dickens, 2007; Horwath, 2007). The concept is used to refer to the “critical moment when we may need to take further steps to protect a child” (Stevenson, 1998, p.7). In practice, however, there are no specific criteria that will explain exactly where the threshold for child protection intervention will begin or end. The point at which this threshold is crossed depends upon a number of factors, about Professor Stevenson proposed to use the

following dimensions of children's well-being as the focus for consideration of 'thresholds', namely, health, education, identity, family and social relationships, emotional and behavioral development, self presentation, and self care skills.

For her proposal on the considerations in determining the 'threshold' for intervention in child neglect cases, Professor Stevenson pointed out that the criteria can be assumed to represent a contemporary consensus about the elements necessary to consider in children's welfare. Citing the view of Ward (1995), she regarded that "this consensus extends beyond professional to 'ordinary' parents." This consensus is supported by the research study of Goodvin et al. (2007), who found that the proportion of respondents for both child protection professionals (the sentinel) and lay community residents (the non-sentinel) who did not perceive a given case scenario as child neglect was very low, ranging from 1.1% to 5.4%.

Yet, in reality, it is not easy to reach a consensus on what child neglect is. As pointed out by Garbarino and Collins (1999), "difficulties in defining what constitutes neglect may stem from changing cultural norms on what standards of behaviors are acceptable" (p.14), because "standards of care are socio-historical constructions that are vulnerable to change" (p.14). It has been shown that child protection professionals perceive hypothetical neglect scenarios as being less serious in general than do lay community members, suggesting that unique perspectives of professionals may foster a higher threshold for considering the seriousness of child neglect scenarios (Dubowitz, Klockner, Star, & Black, 1998; Rose & Meezan, 1996; Rose, 1999). The study by Rose and Meezan (1995) also showed that the mother's judgments of the seriousness of child neglect vary by the subject's role and relationship to children, the mother's cultural group, and the worker's function. Dickens (2007) pointed out the conflicts and tension between social workers and legal professionals arising from their different understanding of the threshold criteria in child neglect cases.

Thresholds reflect the views of what is intolerable and needs intervention. While different understanding and perceptions of these thresholds may impede the development of a consensus for intervention in child neglect cases, they at least provide a chance for the community for dialogue and discussion. Hence, there is a need to examine these thresholds so that we may move forward in protecting children suffering or at risk of neglect, if they do not immediately yield information on when and where to offer help to parents and families in needs.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter reviews the literatures on child neglect. As the literatures have shown, the understanding of child neglect is closely connected with the notion of children's needs, parent responsibility, culture, and a host of other factors. Therefore, it has not been easy to give child neglect a universal definition. Moreover, the difference in understanding has contributed to difficulty in establishing a commonly accepted threshold for intervening in neglectful families. This has in some ways hindered the preventive and early intervention efforts to help families at risk of child neglect.

Despite these difficulties in definition and efforts to help, the effects of child neglect on children are real and long-term. Hence, it is necessary to find a common denominator in the understanding of child neglect and threshold of intervention in Hong Kong as a way to help children and families at risk of child neglect. The next chapter will present a desktop survey on the responses of other places and countries to child neglect for reference of Hong Kong, and the following this, Chapter 4 will present the findings of a telephone survey on the parents' perspective of child neglect in the Hong Kong community.

Chapter 3

Responses to Child Neglect in Different Places/Countries

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviews definitional issues of child neglect. It highlights the difficulties and complexities in defining child neglect. The intricacies of child neglect have posed particular difficulties for intervention in families with the child neglect problem. However, child neglect does affect a large number of children in different societies and its effects on the development of children are well documented in past research. Therefore, prevention and intervention in child neglect cases are necessary. For this purpose, the concept of threshold has been raised to explore questions of when and how to intervene in neglectful families. This chapter follows the previous one in examining responses to child neglect cases in different places/countries, based on the results of a desktop survey of 7 places/countries.

3.2 Scope of the Survey

This desktop survey focuses more on the legal and procedural frameworks in responding to child neglect. In order to have a wider view on the scope of responses to the child neglect problem, the survey attempts to include as many places and countries as possible with the constraints of time and resources of this study. The places and countries included are as follows:

- The United States
- England and Wales
- New South Wales of Australia
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- South Korea
- Hong Kong

The above places and countries are selected for either one of these two reasons: they are in a similar stage of socio-economic development as Hong Kong, or they can serve as an exemplary to Hong Kong because of their more advanced status in child

protection. Countries which meet these criteria but excluded are mostly due to the lack of sufficient information for the purpose of this survey.

For each of these places/countries, the websites of the government ministry/bureau/department responsible for child protection are visited and studied. Besides, protection laws governing child neglect, their procedural framework in responding to child neglect cases (if available), and the websites of the NGOs involved in child protection are studied. The results of this survey are organized and presented in the following areas :

- Responsible government departments/bureaux
- Definitions of Child Neglect
- Children Leaving Unattended
- Main child protection statute
- Children and Young Person in Need of Statutory Care
- Mandatory Reporting of Child Neglect
- Roles and Powers of the Government/Courts
- Punishment of Neglectful Parents
- Legislative Basis for Parent Education/Counseling

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 *Responsible Government Departments/Bureaux*

In one way or another, each of the places/countries covered in this desktop survey avow to the use of a multi-agency approach to child protection. However, each place and country under study differs from others in governmental structure. Therefore, the ministry/department/bureau with lead responsibility in protecting children from neglect in each of these places/countries is also different. The governmental department with lead responsibility is worthy of study because they reflect the place of child protection within the government structure.

United States

At the Federal level, the Children's Bureau of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families under the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for the protection of children from neglect in the United States. The Child Protective Services (CPS) is the governmental agency in many states that responds to reports of child neglect. Some states use names that reflect more family-centered (as opposed

to child-centered) practices, such as "Department of Children & Family Services" (DCFS), as is in Florida.

England and Wales

The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People, chaired by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, carries ultimate responsibility for shaping a national safeguarding system that protects the safety and promotes welfare of children and young people. The Children Services Authorities (county-level and unitary local authorities) together with their statutory partners exercise their child protection function through Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) under the guidance given to them by the Secretary of State.

New South Wales, Australia

The Department of Community Services (DoHS) has lead responsibility for providing and coordinating the community response to care and protect children and young people. It accepts and assesses reports of children and young people suffering from neglect, jointly investigate serious cases with the NSW police, supports families at risk of child neglect, initiates care proceedings for child protection, facilitates out-of-home care for children and young people, and delivers community awareness, education and preventative programs about the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people.

Singapore

The responsibility of protecting children from neglect belongs to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS). Under the MCYS is the Rehabilitation, Protection and Residential Services Division, the service department of which is the Child Protection and Welfare Branch.

Taiwan

The Child Welfare Bureau under the Ministry of Interior owns the responsibility for child protection in Taiwan. At the service level, actual child protection services are provided by local governments in collaboration with NGOs.

South Korea

The Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs takes overall responsibility for protecting children from neglect. At the state level, the National Child Protection Agency (NCPA) prevents child abuse (including neglect) through the cooperation of related organizations. NCPA refers reported cases of child abuse and neglect to appropriate local centers, operates a computer database system for case management, publishes national reports of child abuse on a yearly basis and technically supports the Local Child Protection Agency (LCPA). LCPAs operate multidisciplinary teams for screening child neglect victims and supervise case management through multimodal systems (Pai, Kim, Chung, Ryu, 2009).

Hong Kong

The policy bureau overseeing child protection work is the Labor and Welfare Bureau. At the service level, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) takes direct responsibility for protecting children from neglect. Collaborating with other government departments like the police and NGOs, the SWD discharges its child protection function through its Family and Child Protective Services Units (FCPSU) and integrated family services centres (IFSC)

Summary

The location of child protection services in the governmental machinery reflects the orientation and overall approach of that government taken to combat child neglect. Hong Kong is more in line with South Korea, the United States, and England and Wales. Child protection is more seen in terms of welfare services; and it is often connected to, if not embedded in family welfare services. Whether or not child protection should be an integral part of family services is not only of ideological implication; it has a practical significance because the relationship between child protection services and family services defines how child protection services are to be delivered. Some places/countries do not take the family-centred approach. Singapore and New South Wales, for instance, child protection is seen in terms of children and youth development connecting to the development of the community. Similarly, Taiwan apparently takes a more child-centred approach because the responsibility for child protection falls within the purview of the Child Welfare Bureau under the Ministry of Interior.

3.3.2 Definitions of Child Neglect

United States

In the United States, child neglect is defined by the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) as the ‘deprivation of necessities’, which is defined as “a type of maltreatment that refers to the failure by the caretaker to provide needed, age-appropriate care although financially able to do so, or offered financial or other means to do so.”¹ The NCANDS is a voluntary national data collection and analysis system created in response to the requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. As of July 2009, twenty-four States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands include failure to educate the child as required by law in their definitions of neglect. Seven States include medical neglect and define it as failure to provide any special medical treatment or mental health care needed by the child. Four States define as medical neglect the withholding of medical treatment or nutrition from disabled infants with life-threatening conditions. Approximately 17 States and the District of Columbia include abandonment in their definitions of child neglect, and 18 States, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands provide definitions for abandonment that are separate from the definition of neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2009).

England and Wales

In England and Wales, neglect is defined as a caregiver’s “persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development” (DfES, 2010, p.39). Operationally, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing : (1) to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), (2) to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, (3) to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or (4) to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. Neglect may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child’s basic emotional needs (DfES, 2010).

¹ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/ncands/ncands98/glossary/glossary.pdf>, last retrieved on 5.10.2010.

New South Wales, Australia

In New South Wales, neglect is defined as “the failure to provide the basic necessities of life” (DoCS 2006, Chapter 2, p.6). Including acts of omission or commission, which may or may not be intentional, neglect includes (1) neglect of a child or young person’s basic physical needs such as food, clothing and hygiene, physical shelter, safety from harm, and lack of appropriate supervision, (2) neglect of basic psychological needs, such as the persistent ignoring of a child’s signals of distress, pleas for help, attention, comfort, reassurance, encouragement and acceptance, and (3) neglect of necessary medical care, which is the withholding or failure to provide essential medication for a child.

Singapore

In Singapore, the *National Standards for Protection of Children* defines neglect as “the deliberate denial of a child’s basic needs. This is where a parent or caregiver fails to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care and supervision or forces a child to do things inappropriate for his/her age” (Ministry of Community Development and Sports, 2002, p.8). Two points are worthy of attention in this brief and succinct definition of neglect. First, it only refers to the deliberate acts. Second, the inclusion of forcing a child to do things inappropriate for his/her age indicates that child neglect does not merely refer to acts of omission; it also includes acts of commission. These two features seem to suggest that intention is important in deciding whether or not a parent or caregiver has neglected a child or young person.

Taiwan

The *Children and Youth Welfare Act* does not embrace the term child neglect apart from child maltreatment. *The Guide To Children Youth Protection Work* (兒童及少年工作指南) also does not have an elaborate definition of child neglect. It simply defines it as “acts of ignorance, unintentional or intentional neglect of a child or young person’s basic needs so that improper care results in, or may result in physical or psychological harm to him/her” (p.10). However, the *Children and Youth Welfare Act* does prohibit certain parental behaviors, some of which are acts of child neglect. These include abandoning a child (Article 30(1)), and depriving or preventing children or youth from receiving national education (Article 30(6)). Article 36 stipulates circumstances whereby children or youth may require immediate

protection and placement. These circumstances include parental behaviors which can be considered as neglectful, like children or youth who are not properly reared or cared, and those require immediate medical care but not being treated (Article 36(1) and (2)).

South Korea

Without access to its procedural framework of responding to child abuse, the working definition of child neglect for the purpose of child protection is not known. However, the *Child Welfare Act* of South Korea criminalizes child neglect. It prohibits any person from “abandoning a child under his/her protection and supervision, or neglecting the basic protection, rearing and medical treatments including food, clothing and shelter” (Article 29 sub-paragraph 4). The law also stipulates that any person committing an offence of child neglect is punishable by imprisonment up to 5 years or a fine up to 30 million won (Article 40 sub-paragraph 2).

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, child abandonment and child neglect are criminal offences according to Section 26 and 27 of the Offences Against the Person Ordinance, Chapter 212, the Laws of Hong Kong. For the purpose of child protection, it is defined in the *Procedural Guide For Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007* as “severe or a repeated pattern of lacking of attention to a child’s basic needs that endangers or impairs the child’s health or development” (Social Welfare Department, 2007, p.4). Including a wide range of behaviors which can be harmful or potentially harmful to the children, child neglect in Hong Kong can be physical neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect, or medical neglect.

Summary

Based on the review of the definitions of child neglect in the laws, procedural framework guiding the child protection work of neglected children and the related materials, one observation is worthy of attention and discussion. Regardless of places/countries, all definitions see child neglect in terms of a failure of the parents or the caregivers to meet children’s basic needs. However, what constitutes the basic needs of children can vary with different places. Therefore, the line between neglect and non-neglect, hence the intervention threshold in child neglect cases is not same

for different places/countries.

Another observation is that these places/countries do not have a consensual view on how child neglect should be classified beyond a common definition. Some like Singapore and Taiwan do not attempt to classify child neglect into types. Other like New South Wales, and England and Wales are more elaborative in their classification. Hong Kong is more in line with the latter in that it classifies child neglect into different types. When child neglect is seen to take different forms, it generally implies it is a multifaceted problem requiring different solutions. In other words, the line demarcating each form of neglect from non-neglect is dissimilar and the threshold for intervention is also different.

3.3.3 *Children Leaving Unattended*

An important issue relating to child neglect is that of leaving children unattended. In Hong Kong, child death as a result of unattended child falling from height hits media headlines from time to time. Whether or not there should be laws forbidding parents/care-givers to leave their child alone has been a topic of public concern for over two decades in Hong Kong. Therefore, this desktop survey also makes reference to the experience of the places/countries under study.

The United States

According to the National Child Care Information Centre, only Maryland and Illinois in the United States have laws specifying the age at which kids can be left at home alone.²

- In Maryland, A child under the age of 8 years cannot be left alone. Children under age 8 must always be in the care of a ‘reliable person’ at least 13 years of age ‘to protect the child.’ Any person who violates this law is guilty of a misdemeanor and, on conviction is subject to a fine not exceeding \$500 or imprisonment not exceeding 30 days, or both (Maryland Family Law Article 5-801).
- In Illinois, the child abandonment law specifies that “a person will commit the offense of child abandonment when he or she, as a parent, guardian, or other

² Leaving Your Child Home Alone of the Child Information Gateway, available at : <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/homealone.cfm>; last retrieved on 1, November, 2010

person having physical custody or control of a child, without regard for the mental or physical health, safety, or welfare of that child, knowingly leaves that child who is under the age of 13 without supervision by a responsible person over the age of 14 for a period of 24 hours or more” (720 ILCS 5/12-21.5 - Child Abandonment). This in effect outlaws leaving child unattended in Illinois.

- The laws in Connecticut also forbid leaving children under the age of 12 years old in a place of public accommodation, which means any establishment that caters or offers its services, facilities, or goods to the general public, including any commercial property or building lot where a commercial building will be constructed or offered for sale or rent (Connecticut Public Act No. 97-298). Oregon is also said to have a similar law.
- For other states, they weigh a variety of factors to determine when leaving a child alone is legal. These factors include the maturity of the child, the duration the child was left alone, and the parents’ concern for the well-being of the child.

Though only a few states in the US have laws forbidding parents to leave their children unattended, a number of states have legislations outlawing leaving children of certain age unattended in motor vehicles. These include California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, and Texas. Nevada includes leaving children under 6 unattended in a motor vehicle into its legal definition of child neglect (Statutes 28-710-28-727).

New South Wales

For New South Wales, there is no law covering the minimum age at which children should be left on their own. However, Section 231 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* prohibits leaving children and young person unsupervised in motor vehicles. If the child or young person becomes or is likely to become emotionally distressed, or his/her health becomes or is likely to become permanently or temporarily impaired, the parents are guilty of an offence punishable by 200 penalty units.

Taiwan

In Taiwan, the *Children and Youth Welfare Act* stipulates that parents/guardian(s)/or any parties who actually look after the children and youth shall not leave children alone in a surrounding where may endanger or harm them. Children under age of

six or, children and youth requiring babysitting or special care shall not be left alone or be sit by any individuals who are not suitable to take care of them (Article 30). Anyone who violates the provisions of article 32 may be fined with a penalty of between New Taiwan Dollars Three Thousand (NT\$3,000) and New Taiwan Dollars Fifteen Thousand (NT\$15,000).

Singapore, South Korea, England and Wales, and Hong Kong

As with Singapore, South Korea, and England and Wales, there is no legislation in Hong Kong that covers the minimum age a child may be left alone and how old a baby sister should be. Parents are prosecuted in accordance with Section 27 of the Offences Against the Person Ordinance only when serious or fatal accidents of child death have occurred as a result of being neglected. Between 2005 and the first half of 2007, they handled 49 “home-alone” cases prosecuted 10 parents who left their children unattended at home, with six convicted and four given bind-over orders.³

Summary

From the review, it can be see that it is not a common practice to specify a minimum age at which children should be left to their own care. The exceptions to this common practice include Illinois and Maryland in the United States. However, quite a number of states in the US and New South Wales do have laws forbidding to leave children in the motor vehicles. Connecticut has laws prohibiting leaving children in a place of public accommodation defined by the law.

3.3.4 Main Child Protection Statutes

Protecting children and young people from neglect is operated with a legal/statutory framework, specifically that governing child protection. Under the child protection law, there is usually a procedural framework in defining how different professionals should work to prevent child neglect and respond to neglected children in case they happen. This part will present the main child protection laws and procedural framework governing child protection in each place/country.

³ Child neglect law effective: welfare chief, dated February 20, 2008. Available at : <http://news.gov.hk/en/category/lawandorder/080220/html/080220en08002.htm>, last retrieved on 27.2.2010.

Table 1 : Child protection statutes and procedural guide reviewed

Place/Country	Main Child Protection laws	Procedural Framework/Guide
The United States	The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)	A Coordinated Response to Child Abuse and Neglect : The Foundation for Practice (2003) Child Neglect : A Guide for Prevention, Assessment and Intervention (2006)
England and Wales	Children Act 1989 Children Act 2004 Children and Young Persons Act 2008	Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
New South Wales, Australia	Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998	New South Wales Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention
Hong Kong	Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance, Cap.213	Procedures Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (Revised 2007)
Singapore	Children and Young Persons Act, Chapter 38	National Standards for Protection of Children
Taiwan	Children and Youth Welfare Act (兒童及少年福利法)	Guidelines on Protection Work with Children and Young People (兒童及少年保護工作指南)
Korea	Child Welfare Act of 2000	Not available

United States

For the United States, the *CAPTA* does not delegate the federal government a direct responsibility for child protection. However, it has a great impact on child protection policy and practice at the state and local levels. Specifically, *CAPTA* stipulates the setting up of agencies at national level and authorizes a number of federal funds to support state child protection efforts. It also sets minimum definitional standards, with which each State is responsible for providing its own definition and devising its own legislations and policy of maltreatment within civil and criminal contexts.

England and Wales

Apart from its remedial function in terms of statutory care proceedings the local authorities can take to protect children in need, the *Children Act 1989* of England and Wales also has preventative functions like that of New South Wales in that the

law imposes a general duty on local councils to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, and to promote the upbringing of children in need by their families by providing services needed for the children (Section 17(1)). The *Children Act 2004* further sets out the process for integrating services to children so that every child can achieve the five outcomes set by Every Child Matters: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. Together with the *Children and Young Persons Act 2008*, the child protection laws in England and Wales have struck a reasonable balance between the remedial and preventative functions in child protection.

New South Wales

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* of New South Wales also provides a detailed statutory procedures for protecting children and young people in need of care and protection (Chapter 4). However, it also aims at ensuring that institutions, services and facilities for the care and protection of children and young people provide an environment for them that is free of violence and exploitation, and provide services that foster their health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity; and to promote a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people by providing for appropriate assistance to parents so that they can perform their child-rearing responsibilities (Chapter 1).

Taiwan and South Korea

Like the laws in other places/countries, the laws in Taiwan and South Korea include the provision of statutory care and supervision to children in need or those who are at risk by different levels of the government. Apart from the remedial and preventive functions, however, the child protection laws in these two places have a preventative and developmental function. They also aim at the healthy growth and development of children and young people, and specify the role of the central and local governments in providing for a safe and positive environment their children. For instance, the *Children and Youth Welfare Act* of Taiwan is established “to protect the interest of children and youth and to improve their welfare in order to help the development of physical and mental integrity of the children and youth” (Article 1). For this purpose, “the government, public and private institutions or groups shall help the parents or guardian(s) of children and youth to protect the health of children and youth and to help them in physically and mentally healthy development”

(Article 4). *Child Welfare Act* of South Korea recognizes the responsibilities of the State and local government in promoting the health and welfare of the children (Article 4).

Hong Kong and Singapore

The child protection laws of Hong Kong and Singapore are remedial in the sense that they serve more to provide a legal basis for the responsible government departments to render statutory care and protection to children in need. They do not have clauses that specify the roles and responsibility of the government in providing services for families at risk. In these places/countries, the laws in effect say that the government only get involved with families as much as is needed to protect children and young people from harm, and to make sure that they are developing well.

Summary

In all 7 places, there is no separate law on protecting children from neglect. The protection of children from neglect is provided under the main statute governing the general protection of children and young people, most of them with a focus on protecting children from abuse and neglect. With the exception of the US, the child protection laws in places/countries covered by this survey provide a statutory care proceeding for protecting children suffering or at risk of serious neglect. The laws in New South Wales and England and Wales require the government to intervene and support families at risk, while those of South Korea and Taiwan also stipulate the responsibilities of the government in providing for an environment favorable to the positive development of children and young people, in addition to the remedial and preventive roles of the government in child protection.

3.3.5 *Children and Young Person in Need of Statutory Care*

With the exception of Singapore, the main child protection statutes surveyed in this desktop research cover protection to children and young people under the age of 18. In Singapore, the *Children and Young Persons Act* covers protection only to children and young persons under the age of 16.

England and Wales

In England and Wales, the circumstances that give rise to intervention in families in

need, including the neglectful ones, are the evidence of a child in need. The definition of a 'child in need' is wide and it will embrace children in a diverse range of circumstances. According to Section 17(10) of the *Children Act 1989*, a 'child in need' include those who are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for them of services by a local authority; or if their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services. If initial assessment ascertains that the child in question is a child in need in accordance with Section 17 of the Act, the local authority shall have the responsibility to provide the needed support to this child and his families. If the assessment turns out that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required by Section 47 of the Act to make enquiries to enable it to decide whether it should take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

New South Wales

Section 4 of Chapter 1 of the *Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998* specifies children and young persons to whom the Act applies. These include: children and young persons: (1) who ordinarily live in New South Wales, or (2) who do not ordinarily live in New South Wales, but who are present in New South Wales, or (3) who are subject to an event or circumstances occurring in New South Wales that gives or gives rise to a report. The child protection law of New South Wales requires mandatory reporting of young people who are at risk of harm and whose safety, welfare or well-being is a cause of concern of the professionals delivering services to the children and young persons. Accordingly, children and young people who are at risk of harm and whose safety, welfare or well-being is a cause of concern of the professionals include those whose safety, well-being, and development is jeopardized as a result of being neglected in their care. Statutory protection will be rendered to children and young persons who are assessed to be in need of care and protection in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Act.

Singapore

Section 4 of the *Children and Young Persons Act* in Singapore introduces and elaborates on the legal concept of 'children and young persons in need of protection' that have relevance for protection of children suffering/at risk of neglect. Included in

the definition of ‘children and young persons in need of protection’ are: children and young people whose parents are unfit or unable or has neglected to exercise proper supervision and control over them, those who are falling into bad association, or are exposed to moral danger, or are beyond control (4c); or if the parents are unable or unwilling, or fail in their attempt, to take necessary measures to prevent the child or young person from behaving in a manner that is, or is likely to be, harmful to himself or to any person (4f).

Taiwan

The law in Taiwan does not directly refer to child neglect in child protection. However, Article 36 stipulates that children or young people who are not properly reared or cared; who require immediate medical care but not being treated, and who are abandoned are in need of immediate protection by the government. Article 30 also prohibits certain parental behaviors which are child neglect by nature. These include Article 30 which forbids child abandonment and depriving children of formal education, and Article 32 which forbids parents to leave their children under the age of 6 unattended.

South Korea

Apart from prohibiting child neglect behaviors such as failure to provide basic protection, to rear the children, to render medical treatment, and to provide food, clothing and shelter to the children (Article 29), the *Child Welfare Act* stipulates protective measures for children suffering/at risk of neglect. Article 2(2) stipulates that ‘children requiring protection’ include those whose protector (including parents) is unsuitable for rearing children or incapable of rearing them, such as the protector abuses them. Article 2(4) of the Act defines abuse to include “abandonment and nonintervention (omission) committed by a protector.”

Hong Kong

Like Singapore, the *Protection of Children and Juveniles Ordinance* of Hong Kong (Chapter 213) provides for statutory protection measures for a ‘child and juvenile in need of care and protection’ defined in Section 34(2) as : who has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused; or whose health, development or welfare has been or is being neglected or avoidably impaired; or whose health, development or welfare appears likely to be neglected or avoidably impaired; or

who is beyond control, to the extent that harm may be caused to him or to others, and who requires care or protection. The law in Hong Kong covers protection of children who are neglected or are at risk of being neglected.

Summary

With the exception of Singapore, the child protection laws in this survey offer protection to those who are under 18. The core of this protection focuses on those who are variously defined as a ‘child and juvenile in need of care and protection’ (Hong Kong), ‘children and young persons in need of protection’ (Singapore), ‘child and young person in need of care and protection’ (New South Wales), ‘children requiring protection’ (South Korea), and ‘child in need’ (England and Wales). In the case of Hong Kong, and Singapore, and New South Wales, care proceedings will be initiated for children and young persons so defined. In England and Wales, the identification of a child-in-need will first invoke the role of local authorities in supporting the families in need. Only when there is significant harm or risk of significant harm identified in the neglected child would inquiry be activated to decide whether further actions are needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

3.3.6 Mandatory Reporting of Child Neglect

Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect is a highly contestable practice in child protection. On the one hand, mandatory reporting is considered to be a symbolic acknowledgement of the seriousness of problem, and it reinforces the moral responsibility of community members to report suspected cases and increases the community's awareness of the problem. On the other hand, it also greatly raises the number of reports being made to child protection departments and overwhelms them with ‘false positive’ cases to investigate, rather than to focus the limited resources on the real cases to help.

A common assumption is that mandatory reporting requirements and the legislative grounds for intervention in abusive and neglectful behavior are the same. However, mandatory reporting laws differ in the ways they define the types of situations that must be reported to statutory child protection services, and legislative grounds for intervention define the circumstances and, importantly, the threshold at which the statutory child protection service is legally able to intervene to protect a child.

United States

In the United States, reporting of child neglect is mandated in the Federation Legislation. Therefore, all states have laws mandating the report of real or suspected child neglect cases. In 46 states, neglect is specifically mentioned in the code section requiring mandatory reporting. In 9 states, neglect is either included in or synonymous with child abuse which much be reported.

England and Wales

There is no legislative mandate to report child maltreatment in the UK. Therefore, the child protection laws in England and Wales do not require mandatory reporting of child neglect cases. More recently, however, England and Wales (and Scotland as well) have witnessed the development of inter-agency protocols that emphasize information sharing and structured inter-agency co-operation. It could be argued that these developments are a version of selected professional mandatory reporting, which differ from mandatory reporting only in that they confer a professional obligation rather than a legal requirement (Wallace and Bunting, 2007).

New South Wales

According to Sections 23 and 27 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* in New South Wales, a person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children; and a person who holds a management position in an organization, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children, are required to report cases of child maltreatment, if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm; and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work. Child neglect is included in the maltreatment types which it is mandatory to report.

Taiwan

According to Article 34 of the *Children and Youth Welfare Act*, in case the medical personnel, social workers, educationalists, babysitters, police, judiciary personnel,

and any other parties implementing children and youth welfare learn that the children or youth suffer from behaviors as stated in Article 30 (including cases of child abandonment and depriving children of chances for education) or suffer any other harm, they should communicate immediately with the municipal and county (city) authorities not later than twenty-four (24) hours.

South Korea

According to Article 26 of the *Child Welfare Act*, any person may, when he/she finds a child abuse, report it to a specialized agency for child protection or a criminal investigation agency. However, for certain groups of professionals who find a child abuse case (including neglect) while on duty, they are required to report it to a specialized agency for child protection or a criminal investigation agency. These include teachers, medical practitioners, persons engaged in child welfare facilities, persons engaged in a nursery facilities and kindergartens, etc.

3.3.7 *Roles and Powers of the Government/Courts*

With the exception of Hong Kong and Singapore, all child protection statutes specify, in one way or another, the roles and powers of the government other than making remedies in the form of statutory care to protect child who suffers harm as a result of child neglect or other forms of child maltreatment. These roles include setting up of infrastructure and agencies for child protection of children from abuse and neglect, as well as assisting and supporting families at risk of child abuse and neglect. In all places/countries in this study, they have statutory protection of children suffering or at risk of suffering harm as a result of child abuse and neglect.

3.3.7.1 Infrastructure Needed for Child Protection

United States

Based on *CAPTA*, the role of the Federal government is to provide leadership and assist communities in their child and family protection efforts, and to assist States and communities with the necessary resources to develop and implement a successful and family protection strategies. Among other things, these include setting up of the National Centre on Child Abuse and Neglect to administer the *CAPTA*, authorizing funds to improve state response to child maltreatment (including neglect), support training and regional multi-disciplinary centres for child

protection, conduct research on child protection. The *CAPTA* has been playing a crucial role in developing the system of child protection in the US.

England and Wales

The *Children Act 2004* authorizes the setting up of a Children's Commissioner, whose role is to raise awareness of the best interests of children, to improve the systems related to children's services, to improve the roles of relevant organizations, and to report to parliament on his or her findings. It also encourages integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services as well as improves multi-disciplinary working, remove duplication, increase accountability and improve the coordination of individual and joint inspections in local authorities. Under the *Children Act 2004*, the Director of Children's Services in each local authority has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area.

New South Wales

The role of the NSW government is stipulated in Sections 15 and 16 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. According to Section 16 of the Act, the Director-General has the roles to promote the development, adoption and evaluation of policies and procedures in accordance with the Act, to develop procedures and protocols with governments and agencies and the community sector that promote the care and protection of children and young persons, and to ensure that these procedures and protocols are implemented and regularly reviewed. The law, in effect, specifies that the NSW government has the responsibility to provide a good policy and service framework for child protection and see to it that this framework is followed properly.

Taiwan

Taiwan also specifies the legal role of the government in the *Children and Youth Welfare Act*. The central government through its Child Welfare Bureau under the Ministry of Interior is responsible for the overall planning, budgeting, coordinating, and monitoring of child protection policies and programs (Article 7), while the municipal and county (city) authorities are responsible for the implementation of the child protection policies and programs (Article 8). Besides, the law requires the municipal and county (city) authorities to set up advisory committee to coordinate, study, review, advise and promote the children and youth welfare policies (Article

10), the government and NGOs concerned to train professionals in children and youth welfare by organizing pre-job and on-job-trainings for them (Article 11). It also specifies sources of financial resources needed for protecting children and young persons in Taiwan (Article 12).

South Korea

The *Child Welfare Act* of South Korea provides for the establishment of a Child Policy Coordinating Committee under the Prime Minister to formulate a child policy and to see to it that the policy are implemented by the related ministries for the purpose of promoting the rights, the healthy birth and growth of children (Article 4-2). Besides, the Act directs the State and the local government to take measures for the purpose of child abuse (including neglect) prevention (Article 23). These include developing and implementing child protection policies, conducting research, education, and publicity, and studying the problem of child abuse (including neglect) every five years so as to develop policies against child abuse and neglect. Article 24 also provides for the establishment of the Specialized Child Protection Agency at State level to launch and coordinate efforts on child abuse (including neglect) prevention.

3.3.7.2 Supporting Families in Need/At Risk

The laws in New South Wales and England and Wales stipulate very clearly the roles of the government in intervening in families for the purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect. The child protection law in New South Wales allows the government to enter into what is termed ‘parent responsibility contract’ with the parents or caregivers concerned with a view to helping them improve their parenting competence, while that in England and Wales requires the local authorities to take reasonable steps, through provision of a variety of social services to prevent children within their areas suffering ill-treatment and neglect.

New South Wales

The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* provides a legislative spine for parent responsibility contracts, the aim of which is to encourage parents to improve their parenting skills and accept greater responsibility for their children. A parent responsibility contract is an agreement between primary caregivers and the Department of Community Services targeting at specific problems where there is a specific and tangible response. The contract is to be developed by the

Department of Community Services in collaboration with the primary caregiver for the child or young person in circumstances where the lack of parenting skills or poor behavior of the primary caregivers for the child or young person can be modified within a period of six months so as to adequately reduce the risk of harm to the child or young person. Once agreed to and signed, the contract will be registered in the Children's Court.

Depending on the problems of the primary caregiver, a parent responsibility may require a primary caregiver to attend counseling or treatment programs. Filing the parent responsibility contract with the Children's Court implies that the family is then without the need for any court order or other further action by the court. However, the primary care-giver will seek to solve his or her parenting problems according to the terms of the contract with the support of relevant social services. In this way, the parent responsibility contract will complement the early intervention programs of the Department of Community Services in New South Wales.

A parent responsibility contract may be used as evidence of an attempt to resolve a matter concerning a child's or young person's need for care and protection without initiating a care application. Though it does not create legally enforceable agreement, or give rise to a civil liability, the filing of a contract breach notice with the Children's Court operates as a care application by the Director-General of the Department of Community Services. The same applies to a refusal by a primary caregiver for a child or young person to enter into a parent responsibility contract. Therefore, the parent responsibility contract is actually a preventative strategy to support with children and young people in need of care and protection.

England and Wales

Supporting families is at the heart of the *Children Act 1989* and *Children Act 2004*. In England and Wales, the identification of a child in need does not necessitate the initiation of a care application for the child, unless there is reason to believe that the child in need has suffered significant harm or is at risk of significant harm. A child is in need if he is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority under Part III. Equally, he is in need if his health or development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired without the

provision of such services, or if he is disabled in accordance with Section 17(10, 11) of the Act.

Part III of the Children Act places a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. Local authorities are responsible for supporting children in need and their families in the community with services named in the Act. These include advice, guidance and counseling; day care and family centres, and home help services. There is also a range of services for children looked after by local authorities, including services for young people leaving care.

Intervention in families of child maltreatment is often torn between child protection and family protection. The child protection laws in England and Wales seek a balanced approach. Unless immediate child protection is needed, families with a child in need are first to be supported with adequate family services by local government working in partnership with other public organizations, the voluntary sector, children and young people, parents and caregivers, and the wider community with a view to ensuring that children are protected from harm.

3.3.7.3 Statutory Care and Protection

With the exception of *CAPTA* of the US, statutory care is a core element of child protection in the laws studies. In the US, statutory care of children at risk is the responsibility of States. An examination of the practices of different states in the US is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, only the statutory provisions in the other six places/countries are listed below.

England and Wales

The local authorities in England and Wales may apply to the court for a variety of statutory orders to protect child in need of care or protection. Upon application by a local authority, the court may make a care order or a supervision order on a child up to the age of 16 if it is satisfied that the child concerned is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and that the harm, or likelihood of harm, is attributable to the care given to the child not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give to him (Section 31 of Part IV). The court may also make an education supervision order

if it is satisfied that the child concerned is of compulsory school age and is not being properly educated (Section 36 of Part IV). The court can also make a child assessment order (Section 43 under Part V), an emergency protection order (Section 44 under Part V) in protecting the child in accordance with the *Children Act 1989*.

New South Wales

The Children Court in New South Wales can take a variety of protection measures on a child or young person deemed to be in need of care and protection. It can make a care order on the child or young person whose parents acknowledge that they have serious difficulties in caring for the child or young person and, as a consequence, the child or young person is in need of care and protection; and whose basic physical, psychological or educational needs are not being met, or are likely not to be met, by his or her parents or primary caregivers (Section 71). The Children's Court can also make an order for provision of support services directing a person or organization to provide support for a child or young person for a period not exceeding 12 months (Section 74), an order requiring a child or young person to attend therapeutic or treatment program (Section 75), or a supervision order placing a child or young person under the supervision of the Director-General of the Department of Community Services.

Singapore

According to Section 9 of the *Children and Young Person Act*, the government has the power and authority to remove a child or young person in need of care and protection to a place of safety and bring the child or young person concerned before a Juvenile Court within 3 working days for application of a court order under Section 49(1) of the Act, which empowers the Juvenile Court to order parents to enter into a recognizance to exercise proper care and guardianship, commit the child/young person to the care of a fit person, order the child/young person to be sent to an approved home or a place of safety, and place the child/ young person on statutory supervision.

Taiwan

According to Article 36 the *Children and Youth Welfare Act*, in case children or youth require immediate protection, placement, or any other measures taken to prevent them from immediate danger or endangering their life, body or freedom, the

municipal and county (city) authorities shall take emergency actions to protect, place or deal in their cases. If parents or guardian(s) seriously fail to protect or look after the children, Article 48 of the Act empowers the court to suspend the whole or part of parental rights or guardianship, or to selecting or appoint an appropriate guardian(s) for the children and young persons concerned.

South Korea

According to Article 10 of the *Child Welfare Act*, the government can entrust a ‘child requiring protection’ temporarily to a person who is deemed suitable, such as putting the child in a foster home, putting him into suitable welfare facilities, and committing him to a hospital. In case parent abuses his parental power or is unable to exercise that power to the detriment of the welfare of the child, the government can also request the court to restrict the exercise of the parental power or sentence the loss of parental power in the interest of the child (Article 12). The government may also request the court to re-appoint a suitable person to be guardian of the child (Article 13).

Hong Kong

The government may apply to the juvenile court for a ‘child or juvenile in need of care or protection’ defined in Section 34(2) for a care or protection order. In case where immediate protection is needed, the government is also empowered to remove the child or juvenile to a place of refuge or to a hospital (Section 34E and 34F). In respect of the ‘child or juvenile in need of care or protection’ the juvenile court has the power to (a) appoint the Director of Social Welfare to be the legal guardian of such child or juvenile; or (b) commit him to the care of any person whether a relative or not, who is willing to undertake the care of him, or of any institution which is so willing; or (c) order his parent or guardian to enter into recognizance to exercise proper care and guardianship; or (d) make an order placing him for a specified period, not exceeding 3 years under the supervision of a person appointed for the purpose by the court (Section 34(1)).

Summary

In terms of statutory care and protection, Hong Kong is in line with other places in that its main child protection law, together with *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007*, has very clear provisions governing the statutory protection of neglected children. However, unlike the laws in England and Wales,

New South Wales, and in most of the other places in this review, they do not stipulate the role and responsibilities of the government in providing services to children and families for the purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect.

3.3.8 *Punishment of Neglectful Parents*

Whether stipulated in the child protection law or in other criminal law codes, child neglect is an offence in all places in this review. It is punishable by a fine or by imprisonment. The punitive measure in these places/countries are :

United States

Only 24 states have neglect as a title of a criminal code section. However, almost every state includes a section under which failure of parents to provide necessities to children can be prosecuted to some degree. The penalty of the child neglect offence varies with States.

New South Wales

According to Section 228 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1989*, neglect by parents to provide adequate and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging for a child or young person in his or her care is an offence punishable by a maximum penalty of 200 penalty unit.

England and Wales

Child abuse and neglect is an offence under the *Children and Young Person's Act 1933*. It is punishable on conviction on indictment by a fine and/or imprisonment up to 10 years, or on summary conviction by a fine and/or imprisonment up to 6 months. If a child dies of neglect and other household members knew of the significant risk of serious injury from neglect, they could be guilty of the offence under Section 5 of the *Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims (DVCV) Act 2004* and are punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment up to 14 years.

Singapore

According to Section 5 (5) of *Children and Young Persons Act* (Chapter 38), neglectful parents may be charged of the offence of child maltreatment and are liable to a fine not exceeding \$20,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 7 years or

to both if the neglect causes death to a child, and in any other case, to a fine not exceeding \$4,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 4 years or to both.

Taiwan

According to Article 58 of the *Children and Youth Welfare Act*, parents who abandon their children or who deprived them of formal education may be fined with a penalty of between 60,000 and 300,000 New Taiwan Dollars. Article 60 of the Act empowers the court to impose a fine between 3,000 and 15,000 New Taiwan Dollars for parents who leave their children under the age of 6 unattended.

South Korea

According to Article 40 of the *Child Welfare Act*, persons who have committed an act of abandoning or neglecting a child under their supervision shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than 5 years or a fine not exceeding 30 million won. Article 42 empowers the court to give aggravated punishment up to 1/2 of the amount of punishment for habitual offenders of crimes stipulated in Article 29.

Hong Kong

According to the Section 26 of the *Offences Against the Person Ordinance* (Chapter 212), any person who unlawfully abandons or exposes any child, being under the age of 2 years shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for 10 years; or on summary conviction to imprisonment for 3 years. Section 27 of the Act makes ill-treatment or neglect of children an offence punishable on indictment by imprisonment for 10 years, or on summary conviction imprisonment for 3 years.

3.3.9 *Legislative Basis for Parent Education/Counseling*

Child neglect is often related to inadequate or irresponsible parenting. It can also be due to the lack of parenting knowledge or skills. In many instances, significant harm to children as a result of neglect by parents/caregivers could have prevented if parents could be helped to perform their parental roles. However, parents often lack of motivation to take part in parent education classes to improve their parenting quality.

When serious cases of child neglect occur, the parents or caregivers concerned may be prosecuted. As revealed in the previous section, these parents or caregivers may be

punishable by a fine or by imprisonment in most of the places/countries covered in this study. However, it has been argued that these parents or caregivers should be helped rather than punished. Hence, some places have legal provisions for parent education for parents with problem in parenting.

United States

A lot of States have laws mandating parent education through state statutes, county-wide or district-based mandates, or judicial rules and orders. However, these mandatory parent education programs are not specifically provided in the context of protecting children from abuse and neglect. Rather, they are aimed for separating and divorce parents in the hope of reducing the harm and possibility of domestic violence against children in the divorce and separation process.

New South Wales

Provision of parent education is possible under the Parent responsibility contract in accordance with the *Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. This practice is not entirely mandatory because parents have the option of not entering into these contracts with the responsible government officers. However, refusal to enter into a parent responsibility contract could be used as an evidence for the application of a care order for the child concerned.

England and Wales

According to the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, the court could issue a parenting order requiring a parent to attend for a concurrent period of up to 3 months a counseling or guidance program. Like the case of mandatory parent education in the United States, the parenting order is not specifically tailor-made for the purpose of child protection. It is targeted on preventing the anti-social behaviors of the children and young people due to the inadequacies of the parents. Besides, the court can make a parenting order following a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act of 1996 for failing to ensure a child's attendance at school, a form of education neglect of children.

Singapore

According to Section 5(6) of the *Children and Young Persons Act* (Chapter 38), the

court may require neglectful parents to enter into a bond of good behavior, wherein the court may also include in the bond a condition requiring these parents to undergo counseling, psychotherapy or other appropriate program. Section 51(1) of the Act empowers the juvenile court to require parents of children and young people in need of care or protection to undergo such counseling, psychotherapy or other assessment and treatment to enhancing, promoting or protecting the physical, social and emotional well-being and safety of the child or young person.

Taiwan

Article 65 of the *Children and Youth Welfare Act* empowers the municipal and county (city) authorities to mandate neglectful parents to take more than eight (8) hours and less than fifty (50) hours parental education and counseling and to pay necessary cost. Those who reject to take parental education or counseling, or are unable to complete the hours required by the court, may be fined between 3,000 and 15,000 New Taiwan Dollars.

South Korea and Hong Kong

No legal provision for mandatory parent education.

Summary

With the exception of South Korea and Hong Kong, all places/countries in this review have a legislative basis for parent education. The US mandates parent education for divorcing and separating parents, and for England and Wales, mandatory parent education may be specified in the parenting order for parents whose children have broken the law as a result of their inadequate parenting. For New South Wales, Singapore and Taiwan, their child protection laws have included parent education as a preventive measure or a remedy for child neglect. The approach of New South Wales allows for pre-adjudication intervention in the form of parent education and counseling specified in a parent responsibility contract registered with the children's court, whereas in Singapore and Taiwan, their laws provide clear mandate requiring parents to attend parent education or counseling programs if their children suffer harm as a result of their inadequate parenting.

3.4 Overall Summary of the Desktop Survey

3.4.1 *Definitions of Child Neglect*

Child neglect is variously defined by places/countries covered in this survey. To recapitulate, it is “the failure by the caretaker to provide needed, age-appropriate care although financially able to do so, or offered financial or other means to do so” (United States)⁴, “persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development” (England and Wales), “the failure to provide the basic necessities of life” (New South Wales), “the deliberate denial of a child’s basic needs (Singapore), “acts of ignorance, unintentional or intentional neglect of a child or young person’s basic needs so that improper care results in, or may result in physical or psychological harm to him/her” (Taiwan), and “severe or a repeated pattern of lacking of attention to a child’s basic needs that endangers or impairs the child’s health or development” (Hong Kong).

Its definition is closely linked to the failure of caregivers to meet a child’s basic needs. Beyond this generality, however, the places/countries tend to qualify their respective definition differently, with the duration of neglectful behaviors, with the intent of the caregivers, with the harm caused or the potential of it, and with the severity and repetitiveness of the lack of the attention to the children’s basic needs. These differences in definition suggest that child neglect can be understood somewhat different in different social context. In one way or another, it is socially constructed.

3.4.2 *Criminalization of Child Neglect and Related Behaviors*

Child neglect that causes grave harm to the children is a criminal offence in all places/countries covered in this review. Some like Hong Kong have neglect as a title in the criminal law or in the criminal code section. Other like New South Wales, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea include a section in their child protection laws specifying that child neglect by the parents/caregivers is a punishable offence that can be prosecuted to some degree. In addition to child neglect in general, the child protection statutes in Taiwan and some States in the United States outlaw leaving children attended. Like many States in the US, that in New South Wales makes leaving children alone in vehicle a

⁴ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/ncands/ncands98/glossary/glossary.pdf>, last retrieved on 5.10.2010.

punishable offence.

3.4.3 *Legal Measures of Protecting Children from Neglect*

Places/countries in this survey are developed areas of the world. They are on a more advanced stage of social and economic development. For this reason, they have developed different types of responses to the child neglect problem. Since child neglect can cause serious harm to the children and their long term development, it may require legal protection of children and sometimes prosecution of the caregivers whose neglectful behaviors have constituted an offence. All places/countries in this review have enacted child protection and criminal laws which, together or other laws, serve to provide a legal framework to guide their responses to the neglected children and their families.

3.4.3.1 Mandatory Reporting

Bringing children and families at risk to the attention of authorities concerned for appropriate intervention is an important issue in protecting children from neglect. Despite the complexities of mandatory reporting, some places/countries opt for requiring specific groups of professionals working with children and young people. These places/countries include the United States, New South Wales, Taiwan, and South Korea. Like England and Wales, there is legislative requirement to report child abuse and neglect in Hong Kong. However, it can be argued that the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007* is procedurally binding the professionals working with children to report these cases. Therefore, it may have similar effects of a mandatory reporting law.

3.4.3.2 Statutory Care and Supervision

The core of legal responses common to all places/countries in this survey is statutory care and protection to children who either suffer harm or significant harm or are at the risk of it, as a result of their being neglected. These statutory protections include such emergency protection measures as a court order for assessment, removal of the child to a safe place such as a hospital or a place of refuge, statutory care and supervision of the child, requiring parents to enter in recognizance to exercise proper care and guardianship, and in some cases, transfer or termination of parental power/guardianship. These measures aim at assuring the immediate safety of the child through providing statutory care and protection to the child by the government department concerned.

3.4.3.3 Legal Intervention in Parents

Punishing parents is a sensitive and debatable option. Where legal protection of children is concerned, some parents may need to improve their parenting quality for prevention or stopping the problem. The child protection law in Singapore and Hong Kong allows for the minimalist intervention of requiring parents to enter in recognizance to exercise proper care and guardianship. If parents breach this bond, they will then be fined. However, this option does not avail help or assistance to parents who have problem and difficulties in parenting. Improvement in parenting depends entirely on the motivation of the parents themselves.

Besides a bond, there is the practice of requiring caregivers to enter into parent responsibility contract with the government department responsible for child welfare and development, as in New South Wales. This practice is in some way akin to requiring parents to enter in recognizance to exercise proper care and guardianship, as in Singapore and Hong Kong. However, the parent responsibility contract is very specific about the areas in need of improvement required of the caregivers and it is registered in the children's court. Breach of the contract may give rise to the application of care and supervision order for the child concerned. Hence, it can be a powerful tool to improve parenting of the care-givers, especially for those who are lack of parenting knowledge and skills in discharging their care-giving roles.

Where parents or caregivers are prosecuted for an offence of child neglect, there is the possibility that they are helped to improve their parenting competence. The child protection laws of Taiwan and Singapore can require parents to attend a parent education or counseling program. In other places, mandatory parent education is possible outside the immediate context of child protection, but they have impacts on protection of children and young people from neglect. For instance, a lot of States in the US mandate parent education for separating and divorcing parents; and in England and Wales, parents may be required to attend counseling and guidance under a parenting order made under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

3.4.3.4 Family Support

Child neglect is often a result of circumstances in the families that render parents unable to fulfill their roles as care-givers adequately. Support to families with, or at risk of, the child neglect problem is needed as a preventive measure to stop the problem from

developing or deteriorating into a tragedy. Some of the places/countries specify in their child protection law the role of government in supporting families indirectly (like the United States) or indirectly (like Taiwan, New South Wales, and England and Wales). The *Children Act 1989* of England and Wales is very clear about the duties and responsibilities of the local authorities in supporting children in need and promote the upbringing of children by their families. It is also specific about the type of services (including financial assistance) to be provided for the support of these families.

3.4.3.5 Infrastructure for Safe and Healthy Development of Children

Child protection in general, and protecting children from being neglected in particular, is more than the provision of statutory care to neglected children or those at risk. Supporting families in difficulties and those at risk of the child neglect problem is neither enough. A comprehensive framework of child protection should also include fostering and providing a safe and healthy environment for the development of children and young people. Therefore, the role of government should include the development and provision of an infrastructure favorable to the physically and psychologically healthy development of the young generation. The child protection law of the United States, New South Wales, and England and Wales, Taiwan, and South Korea acknowledge and stipulate in varying degrees the roles of the government in this regard. The child protection law in Hong Kong is more remedial in this sense.

3.4.4 *Threshold of Interventions*

Unlike child abuse which often leads to immediately observable injuries on the child, the harm caused by neglecting a child commonly takes a long time to notice. Therefore, decision to intervene in neglectful families is usually not easy to make. In many instances, compulsory intervention in child neglect cases is only possible when a tragic incident has occurred. The threshold for intervention in child neglect cases is a practical consideration in protecting children from neglect.

In this review, it is found that different places/countries use different legal concepts to describe the threshold for intervention in child neglect cases. For places/countries which provide a range of options for legal intervention in families, there are usually different thresholds for different forms of interventions. The law of Taiwan relies on the concept of ‘immediate danger’ or ‘risk of danger’ (立即之危險或有危險之虞) as a threshold of immediate legal protection. In the case of Singapore and Hong Kong, the

identification of a child/juvenile/young person in need qualified by the law is a requisite threshold for application of a care and supervision order.

In New South Wales, for instance, the threshold for reporting a case is a reasonable ground for a suspicion of 'risk of harm', if there are current concerns that a child or young person may suffer physical, sexual, psychological, and/or emotional harm as a result of what is being done or not done by the parents/caregivers. This notion of 'risk of harm' renders the caseworkers of the Department of Community Services to conduct a comprehensive assessment to ascertain whether the harm or risk of harm is substantiated. For the Government to take further actions to protect the child in accordance with the child protection law, it has to establish that the child or young person is 'in need of care and protection'. A range of options is then open to the government depending on the actual circumstances of the case, including child and family support, through development of care plan, use of parent responsibility contract, to seeking appropriate court orders for the child or young persons.

In England and Wales, the first threshold to intervene in a neglectful family is 'a child in need' with no suspected actual or likely significant harm. The identification of 'a child in need' does not make the application of a care or supervision order a starting point of legal intervention for the purpose of child protection. Instead this activates the role of the government to provide the needed services to support the children in question and their families based on their needs and circumstances according to Part III of the *Children Act 1989*. In preference to the use of the word 'risk' as in the case of New South Wales, the *Children Act 1989* introduced the core concept of 'significant harm' as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life, in the best interest of the children. Assessment is then required to be made to ascertain whether the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Significant harm to children then gives rise to both child welfare and law enforcement concerns in accordance with the child protection law and other criminal law.

Chapter 4

Telephone Survey on “Parental Perspectives on Child Neglect in Hong Kong”

4.1 Introduction

In Hong Kong, the annual statistical reports of the Child Protection Registry show that the number of child neglect cases rose from 22 in 1996 to 109 in 2009. The number of newly reported child neglect cases for the months between January and September 2010 is 94⁵. In the light of these figures, the child neglect problem is looming large in Hong Kong. With increasing public attention to the child neglect problem, and considering that child neglect negatively impacts on both the life and life chances of the children affected, it is necessary for our society to face up to the problem and find effective measures to prevent it.

Unlike child abuse, the effects of neglect on children often take a long time to be observable. Deciding when to intervene in families of child neglect is not easy. In the United States, child protection professionals commonly use risk assessment instrument to aid their assessment and decisions; and in England, the Department of Health has developed the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families for use by the professionals. These measures may bring some consistency in the decisions of the professionals. However, there is still a gap between professionals and laymen in their definitions and understanding of child neglect (Goodvin et al., 2007). This gap will inevitably contribute to difficulties in intervening in child neglect cases.

In Hong Kong, the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases Revised 2007* specifies child neglect as “severe or a repeated pattern of lacking of attention to a child’s basic needs that endangers or impairs the child’s health or development” (p.4). In actual practice, the decision of whether or not a certain case is that of child neglect leaves more to the professionals handling the case. The views of the parents may be explored in individual cases, but there is not yet systematic attempt to study the parental perspectives on what constitute child neglect and their views on the thresholds for intervention in the child neglect cases.

⁵ Statistics from the Annual Statistical Reports of the Child Protection Registry from 1996 to 2010; and from website <http://www.swd.gov.hk/vs/english/stat.html> , retrieved on 4.12.2010.

In light of the above, a survey to explore the parental views on child neglect and issues relating to intervention in child neglect cases is conducted. As reviewed in earlier sections of this report, child neglect is closely connected with the notion of children's needs and responsibilities of parents as primary caregivers in meeting these needs. Therefore, research on parental perspectives on child neglect will necessarily touch on their views on children's needs and parental responsibilities. Bearing these in mind, this study sets out with the following objectives:

- to identify parental views on the needs of children in Hong Kong;
- to explore parental views on their responsibility in meeting children's needs;
- to study the acceptability of parents on different forms of child neglect;
- to find out the views of parents on different forms of intervening in neglectful families, including relatives' help, assistance by neighbors, social work intervention and police intervention.

4.2 Methods of Study

4.2.1 *Telephone Survey*

Telephone survey is used for the purpose of this study. There are both disadvantages and advantages of telephone survey. The disadvantages include call screening, limited open-end questions or time constraints, attention of the respondents due to distractions in their home environment, call time limited to window of 6:00 pm and 9:00 pm which interrupts dinner and family time, etc. The advantages of it include large scale accessibility of respondents, rapid data collection, lower cost of data collection, and structured responses facilitated by computer and telecommunication technologies. Having considered the exploratory nature of this study, telephone survey is used because it is possible to reach large sample at a relatively low financial and time cost.

4.2.2 *Sampling Method*

This survey covers all parents who can be reached with residential telephone line in Hong Kong. Totally 1,000 parents with at least a child under the age of 16 are interviewed to solicit their views on the basic needs of children in Hong Kong, their acceptability of different types of neglectful parenting practices/behaviors, and their views on different forms of intervention to different categories of child neglect cases. These parents are all randomly sampled via the residential telephone lines published in

PCCW Residential Telephone Line Directory.

All telephone interviews were conducted by trained interviewers of the Computer-Assisted Survey Team (CAST) of the Centre for Social Policy Studies of the Department of Applied Social Sciences, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University using the WinCATI system between 18th August, 2010 and 30th October, 2010. The total number of calls made and the classification of these calls are presented in Table 2 below :

Table 2 : Classification of calls

Types of calls	Frequency
Complete Interviews (I)	1046
Partial Interviews (P)	178
Refused Eligible Units (R)	1114
No Eligible Units (NE)	10564
Non-contacted but known eligible units (NC) Non-con	1502
Other Non-interviewed units (NI)	13591
Total number of telephone line dialed	27995

Based on the formula of Groves (1989), this survey achieved a contact rate⁶ of 91.38% and a cooperation rate⁷ of 44.74%.

4.2.3 Data Collection and Instruments

A set of structured questionnaire was administered to the eligible parent sampled for the telephone interview. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part consists of 6 questions asking parents respondents their views on different children's needs and another 6 questions on the responsibility of parents in meeting these needs. The second part includes questions asking respondents' views on child neglect and different forms of intervention in child neglect cases. Based on the concepts of child neglect elaborated in Section 2.8, child neglect is taken to consist of physical neglect, education neglect,

⁶ Contact Rate = $(I+P+R+NI)/(I+P+R+NI+NC)$

⁷ Cooperation rate = $I/(I+P+R)$.

emotional neglect and medical neglect. Four to five vignettes were developed for each type of child neglect. Altogether 17 vignettes were developed. For each vignette, respondents were first asked of the extent to which they think it is a case of child neglect (i.e. their tendency to define the case-in-question as child neglect), and then their views of relatives' help, assistance by neighbors, social work intervention, and police interviews. The third part of the question is on the respondents' demographic background, including their age, sex, education attainment, income, whether or not their families receive CSSA, and if they have been neglected as a child before, and if they have neglected their child(ren).

The questionnaire was piloted tested on 5 respondents and revised before they were formally put to use for the purpose of this survey. An average telephone interview for the purpose of this survey would take about 30 to 35 minutes to complete. For question items covered in the telephone survey, please refer to Appendix II of this Report.

4.2.4 *Data Analysis*

4.2.4.1 Univariate Analysis

For the purposes of this survey, a single or a composite index is developed for (i) parental views on needs of children in different aspects, (ii) their views on the roles parents in meeting different areas of children's needs, (iii) their definitional tendency in different types of child neglect, and (iv) their views on the types of intervention to the neglectful families. These indices range between 1 and 5, with higher scores indicating a more positive view of the issue.

4.2.4.2 Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis on the relationship between respondents' demographic background and views on (i) children's needs, (ii) parental role in meeting these needs, (iii) type of child neglect, and (iv) different types of interventions in different child neglect cases are performed.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Respondents' Background

There are 1046 respondents in the survey. About one third of them are males (338). Among the respondents, 27% (281) persons are 25 years old or below. Forty-five percent (470) respondents are between 26 to 35 years old. Twenty percent (204) respondents are between 36 to 50 years old and 7% (74) are between 51 to 60 years old. Only 0.7% (7) respondents are over 60 years.

For respondents' education level, 0.6% (6) of them received education up to the kindergarten or below. Three point five percent (37) are up primary level. About half of the respondents (514) have attained junior education (Form 3). Nine point six percent (100) respondents have attained F.7 level, while 8.9% (93) respondents are of tertiary education level. Twenty-eight percent (293) respondents have received university education or over.

Thirty-three point seven percent (352) respondents are not in employment. Eighty-nine point two percent of these respondents (314) are household keepers, 4.3% (15) respondents are retired, 5.1% (18) are job seekers, and 1.1% (4) are students. For the 694 respondents who are working, 26.4% (183) and 11.5% (80) are managers and administrators, 103 persons (14.8%) and 136 persons (19.6%) are associate professionals and professionals respectively. In addition, 73 persons (10.5%) are service workers and shop sales workers, and 52 persons (7.5%) are craft and related workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers. In addition, 30 respondents (4.2%) are in elementary occupations.

Ninety-six point six percent of respondents (1010) are married. Only 0.4% (4) are never married. Another 0.4% (4) are remarried while 2.1% (22) are separated or divorced. Point two percent (2) are widowed.

As far as household size is concerned, only 1.1% (12) of the respondents are living in 2-person household, 42.7% (447) in 4-person household, 31.9% (334) in 3-person household, and 16.1% (168) and 8.1% (85) are from households with 5 people or more.

Three-eight point nine percent (407) of the respondents have more than one child below 16 years old. About 46% of these respondents (189) have their youngest child aged between 0 and 5, 36.9% (150) have their youngest child aged between 6 and 10, 16.7%

(68) have their young child aged between 11 and 15.

Nine point six percent (100) of the respondents have family members who are new immigrants having resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years, and families of 1.8% (19) and 2.4% (25) of the respondents are receiving CSSA or have received CSSA respectively .

Fifteen point eight percent (165) of the respondents and 11.8% (123) of the respondents' spouses claimed that they had been neglected by their parents when they were small. On the other hand, 10.4% (109) of the respondents considered that they or their spouses have neglected their children while only 3.9% (41) of the respondents regarded that they have neglected to take care of their children.

4.3.2 Statistical Properties of the Instrument

4.3.2.1 Reliability

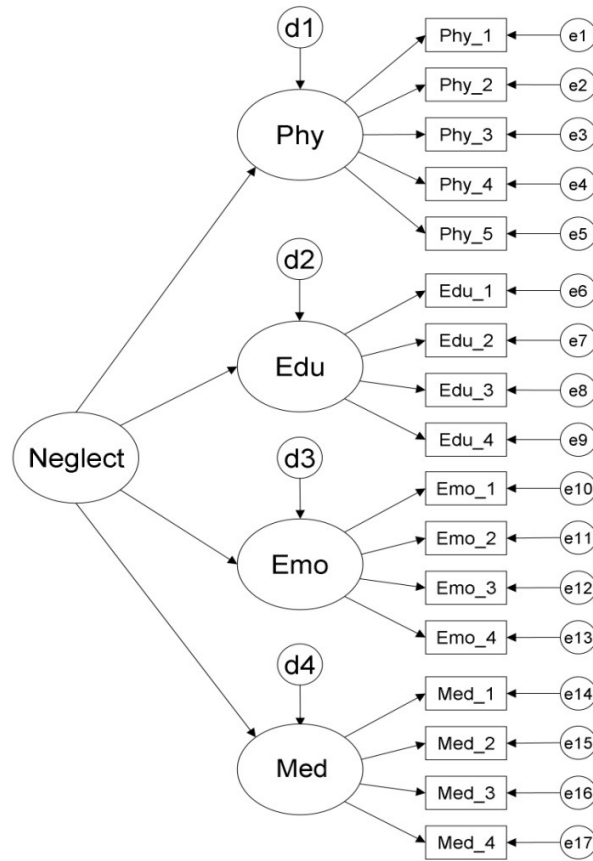
The Cronbach's alpha of the 17-item NEGLECT scale is .84, and the Guttman split-half is 0.77. Since a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations (Creswell, 2002), these results indicate that the internal consistency of the NEGLECT scale is satisfactory.

4.3.2.2 Factorial Validity

As described in Section 4.2.3 of this report, a total of 17 brief scenarios were developed to assess the respondents' views on different types of child neglect and different form intervention in child neglect cases. Of these 17 brief scenarios, 5 are on physical neglect, 4 on emotional neglect, 4 on education neglect, and 4 on medical neglect. The first step in our analysis is to test the factorial validity of the instruments we have developed.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the techniques of structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed. The main objective of the estimation process in SEM is to yield parameter values such that the discrepancy between the sample covariance matrix S and the population covariance matrix implied by our hypothesized model $\Sigma(\theta)$ is minimal. In our case, the hypothesized model is the 4-factor NEGLECT scale as depicted in Figure 1 below. The null hypothesis being tested is that the hypothesized model will hold in the population, i.e. $\Sigma = \Sigma(\theta)$.

Figure 1 : Hypothesized 4-factor model of the NEGLECT scale



The main findings of the CFA are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. In reviewing the goodness-of-fit statistics in Table 3, we can see that our hypothesized model fits the data very well as evidenced by the CFI of .946 and RMSEA of .40. The GFI is .962 and the AGFI is .950, which indicate that 95% of the S matrix is predicted by the reproduced matrix Σ . In other words, 95% of the variance and covariance in S is predicted by the matrix by our hypothetical model. Taken together, the findings on the fit indices support the validity of our hypothesized 4-factor model of NEGLECT. Child neglect is comprised of 4 areas, namely, physical neglect, educational neglect, emotional neglect, and medical neglect. We shall proceed with our analysis on the basis of this finding.

Figure 2: Results of confirmatory factory analysis on the Hypothesized 4-factor model of the NEGLECT scale

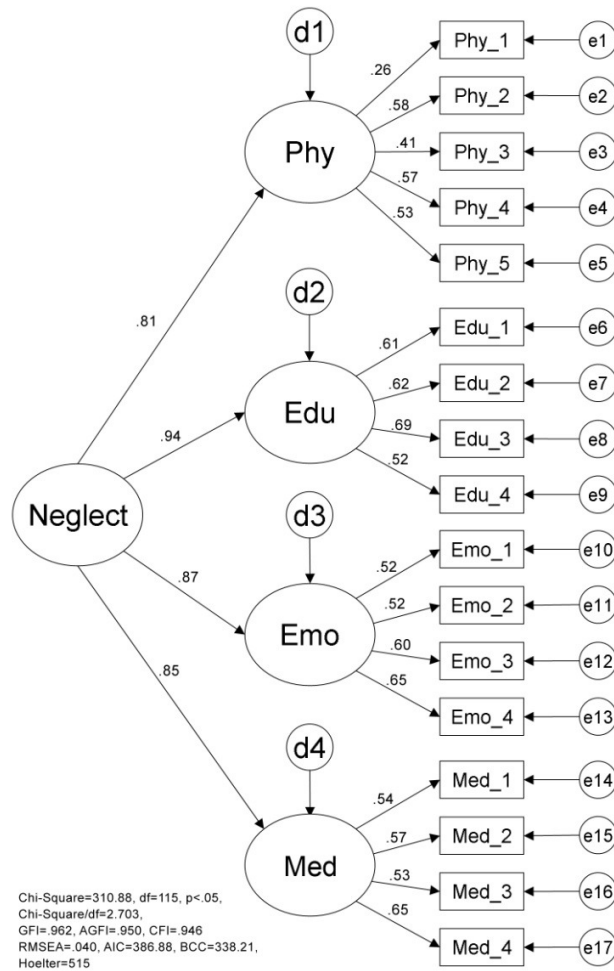


Table 3 : Output of CFA on the NEGLECT Scale by AMOS

Computation of degrees of freedom						
Number of distinct sample moments : 153						
Number of distinct parameters to be estimated : 38						
Degree of Freedom (153-38) : 115						
Results						
Minimum was achieved						
Chi-square = 310.881						
Degree of freedom : 115						
Probability level : .000						
Model Fit Summary						
<i>CMIN/FMIN</i>						
Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF	FMIN
Hypothesized Model	38	310.881	115	.000	2.703	.297
Saturated Model	153	.000	0	-	-	.000
Independence Model	17	3746.640	136	.000	27.549	3.585
<i>Fit Indices</i>						
Model	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMR	RMSEA
Hypothesized Model	.962	.950	.946	.917	.040	.040
Saturated Model	1.000	-	1.000	1.000	.000	-
Independence Model	.489	.425	.000	.000	.268	.159

4.3.3 Parental Views on Children's Needs

Parents taking part in the telephone survey rated very highly when they were presented different areas of children's needs for their view (See Table 4 below). The results indicate that parent respondents highly affirms the various needs of children, including the need for food and clothing (mean=4.52, SD=.683), the need for respect and recognition (mean=4.54, SD=.572), the need for care and concern (mean=4.70, SD=.457), the need for protection (mean=4.64, SD=.516), the need for education (mean=4.59, SD=.537), and the need for medical care (mean=4.73, SD=.454).

Table 4 : Parents' views on different needs of the children

Areas of Needs	N	Min	Max	Mean*	SD
Food and clothing	1046	1	5	4.52	.683
Respect and recognition	1046	2	5	4.54	.572
Care and concern	1046	4	5	4.70	.457
Protection	1046	2	5	4.64	.516
Education	1046	1	5	4.59	.537
Proper medical care	1046	2	5	4.73	.454

* note : higher values indicate more endorsement of a need area of children

4.3.4 Views on Parental/Family Responsibility

Table 5 below presents the results on respondents' views on parental responsibility in providing for different needs of the children. Parent respondents generally considered that parents have the duty to provide for different needs of the children: food and clothing (mean=4.68, SD=.498), respect and recognition (mean=4.51, SD=.528), care and concern (mean=4.71, SD=.462), protection (mean=4.68, SD=.482), education (mean=4.55, SD=.554), and medical care education (mean=4.71, SD=.46).

Table 5 : Parents' views on parental responsibility in meeting various children's needs

Parental Responsibility	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Food and clothing	1046	2	5	4.68	.498
Respect and recognition	1046	2	5	4.51	.528
Care and concern	1046	2	5	4.71	.462
Protection	1046	2	5	4.68	.482
Education	1046	1	5	4.55	.554
Proper medical care	1046	3	5	4.71	.460

* note : higher values indicate more agreement on parental responsibility in meeting a specific need area of children

4.3.5 *Definitional Tendency in Different Child Neglect Cases*

Table 6 presents the findings on respondents' definitional tendency in different forms of child neglect cases. If their definitional tendency is high in a specific area of child neglect, this usually means that they are more aware of the problem and more tend to see it in term of child neglect. From Table 6, there is a marked difference in the definitional tendency in physical child neglect and other forms of child neglect among the respondents. The mean score of respondents in physical child neglect cases is 4.21 (SD=.579), and the mean scores of education, emotional and medical neglect are 3.85 (SD=.743), 3.09 (SD=.762), and 3.53 (SD=.80). From these results, it can be seen that the parent respondents have the highest definitional tendency in physical neglect cases, whereas that in emotional neglect cases is the lowest among the respondents.

Table 6 : Definitional tendency of respondents in different child neglect cases

Forms of Neglect	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Physical neglect	1046	1.00	5.00	4.21	.579
Education neglect	1046	1.00	5.00	3.85	.743
Emotional neglect	1046	1.00	5.00	3.09	.762
Medical neglect	1046	1.00	5.00	3.53	.801

Table 7 shows the relationships between respondents' demographic backgrounds and their definitional tendency in different forms of child neglect cases. A number of observations can be highlighted from Table 7. First, the age and educational level of the respondents are statistically significant factors affecting the definitional tendency of the respondents in all except physical child neglect cases. Older respondents are more likely younger respondents to apply the child neglect label to vignettes presented to them in the survey. However, the relationship between respondents' education level and their definitional tendencies does not appear to be linear. Generally speaking, those with junior education or less, and those with tertiary/university education or above are less likely than those with senior secondary education to define a case as educational, emotional, and medical child neglect.

Table 7 : Relationships between respondents' demographic backgrounds and their definitional tendency in child neglect cases

	Physical Mean ^a (SD)	Educational Mean ^a (SD)	Emotional Mean ^a (SD)	Medical Mean ^a (SD)	NEGLECT Mean ^b (SD)
Respondent					
Gender					
1. Male (n=338)	1 = 4.194 (.61)	1 = 3.819 (.75)	1 = 3.071 (.74)	1 = 3.471 (.81)	1 = 14.56 (2.30)
2. Female (n=708)	2 = 4.212 (.57)	2 = 3.862 (.74)	2 = 3.105 (.77)	2 = 3.564 (.79)	2 = 14.74 (2.57)
	t (1044) = -.471	t (1044) = -.870	t (1044) = -.679	t (1044) = -1.760	t (1044) = -1.25
Age					
1. 30 or below (n=445)	1 = 4.196 (.57)	1 = 3.748 (.75)	1 = 3.034 (.75)	1 = 3.475 (.82)	1 = 14.453 (2.28)
2. Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 4.221 (.58)	2 = 3.933 (.72)	2 = 3.147 (.77)	2 = 3.586 (.78)	2 = 14.888 (2.21)
	t (1034) = -.719	t (1034) = -4.02***	t (1034) = -2.382*	t (1034) = -2.217*	t (1034) = -3.092*
Education Level					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 4.131 (.62)	1 = 3.973 (.71)	1 = 2.230 (.78)	1 = 3.738 (.82)	1 = 15.072 (2.36)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 4.2446 (.57)	2 = 3.983 (.72)	2 = 3.138 (.77)	2 = 3.580 (.79)	2 = 14.871 (2.26)
3= Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 4.195(.56)	3 = 3.715 (.77)	3 = 2.975 (.73)	3 = 3.381 (.78)	3 = 14.266 (2.19)
	F (2, 1040) = 2.746	F (2, 1040) = 10.555**	F (2, 1040) = 8.590**	F (2, 1040) = 14.266**	F (2, 1040) = 11.048**
Monthly Personal Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 4.175 (.64)	1 = 4.070 (.65)	1 = 3.155 (.75)	1 = 3.669 (.82)	1 = 15.069 (2.26)
2= 10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 4.237 (.55)	2 = 3.798 (.74)	2 = 3.040 (.73)	2 = 3.498 (.81)	2 = 14.572 (2.20)
	t (577) = -.940	t (577) = 3.262*	t (577) = 1.360	t (577) = 1.820	t (577) = 1.947
Neglected when young					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 4.278 (.57)	1 = 3.923 (.78)	1 = 3.221 (.79)	1 = 3.641 (.80)	1 = 15.062 (2.33)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 4.198 (.57)	2 = 3.837 (.74)	2 = 3.070 (.76)	2 = 3.091(.80)	2 = 14.641 (2.25)
	t (1016) = 1.641	t (1016) = 1.364	t (1016) = 2.327*	t (1016) = 1.926	t (1016) = 2.329*
Family					
Number of children below 16					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 4.239 (.59)	1 = 3.869 (.76)	1 = 3.097 (.76)	1 = 3.570 (.80)	1 = 14.776 (2.26)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 4.156 (.56)	2 = 3.814 (.72)	2 = 3.089(.76)	2 = 3.477 (.80)	2 = 14.536 (2.29)
	t (1044) = 2.256*	t (1044) = 1.176	t (865) = .173	t (869) = 1.839	t (1044) = 1.664
Monthly Family Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 4.082 (.71)	1 = 4.057 (.76)	1 = 3.330 (.84)	1 = 3.617 (.98)	1 = 15.086 (2.65)
2= 10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 4.230 (.57)	2 = 3.854 (.74)	2 = 3.102 (.77)	2 = 3.571 (.79)	2 = 14.756 (2.26)
	t (837) = -1.99*	t (837) = 2.125*	t (837) = 2.301*	t (837) = .453*	t (837) = 1.121
CSSA					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.988 (2.10)	1 = 3.882 (.67)	1 = 3.250 (.78)	1 = 3.662 (.76)	1 = 14.782 (2.10)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 4.218 (.58)	2 = 3.851(.74)	2 = 3.092 (.76)	2 = 3.534 (.80)	2 = 14.696 (2.27)
	t (1035) = -2.29*	t (1035) = .241	t (1035) = 1.184	t (1035) = .912	t (1035) = .219

Note : a : min=1, max=5; b : min=1, max=17; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Variables in family demography are significant factors affecting the definitional tendency of the respondents in physical child neglect cases. Families with more than one child under the age of 16, those with a monthly family income of less than HK\$10,000, and those which receive the Comprehensive Social Security Assistant are significantly less likely to define a case as one of physical child neglect. However, they are more much likely to apply the educational, emotional, and educational neglect labels in child neglect cases than those with higher income.

4.3.6 Views on Different Forms of Intervention in Child Neglect Cases

Table 8 shows the results on the views of the respondents on different types of intervention in types of child neglect cases, higher values denoting greater preference for the corresponding intervention in a specific type of child neglect case.

Despite the wide array of views, the following observations can be concluded. First, intervention by social workers is the most preferred form of intervention in child neglect cases (mean=3.68, SD=.481), and intervention by police is least preferred (mean=2.88, SD=.600). Generally speaking, respondents welcome help from neighbors (mean=3.31, SD=.679) more than that of the relatives (mean=3.02, SD=.730).

Secondly, intervention by neighbor is most preferred form of responses in cases of physical and medical neglect (mean=3.51, SD=.778; and mean=2.66, SD=.700 respectively), and it is second to social work intervention in the other two types of child neglect cases (mean=3.41, SD=.857 for education neglect, and mean=2.89, SD=.792 for emotional neglect respectively). Obviously, the respondents expect that the neighbors could play a more significant role in helping the neglectful families.

Last but not the least, the respondents seem to be fairly hesitant about the role of the relatives in child neglect cases. It is the least preferred form of intervention in educational neglect cases (mean=3.07, SD=.922) and the second least welcome form of intervention in the other types of child neglect cases (mean=3.37, SD=.718 for physical neglect, mean=2.57, SD=.765 for emotional neglect, and mean=3.16, SD=.832 for medical neglect respectively).

Table 8 : Respondents' View on Intervention in Child Neglect Cases (N=1046)

	Social Work	Police	Neighbor	Relatives
	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Physical neglect	3.30 (.718)	3.17 (.741)	3.51 (.778)	3.37 (.718)
Educational neglect	4.19 (.535)	3.10 (.828)	3.41 (.857)	3.07 (.922)
Emotional neglect	3.04 (.709)	2.17 (.525)	2.89 (.792)	2.57 (.765)
Medical neglect	3.50 (.708)	2.56 (.727)	3.66 (.700)	3.16 (.832)
All neglect cases	3.68 (.481)	2.88 (.600)	3.31 (.679)	3.02 (.730)

Note : Higher mean values denote greater preference for a corresponding type of intervention

4.3.7 Preference for Intervention and Respondents Demographic Backgrounds

4.3.7.1 Social Work Intervention

Table 9 on p.60 presents the findings on the relationship between respondents' preference for social work intervention in different forms of child neglect cases and their demographic background. It can be seen from Table 9 that there is no statistically significant difference in respondents' preference for social work intervention in emotional and medical child neglect cases with respect to their demographic backgrounds. However, older respondents and those with only one child less than 16 years old have stronger preference for social work intervention in families with physical child neglect. For cases of educational neglect, female respondents have statistically more preference for social work intervention than male respondents. Those with junior secondary education or less, and those with tertiary/university education, are more hesitant for social work intervention in these cases.

Table 9 : Respondents' demographic background and their views on social work intervention in different forms of child neglect

Respondent	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Gender					
1. Male (n=338)	1 = 3.343 (.73)	1 = 4.109 (.57)	1 = 3.024 (.75)	1 = 3.525 (.74)	1 = 3.646 (.51)
2. Female (n=708)	2 = 3.278 (.71)	2 = 4.235 (.51)	2 = 3.049 (.69)	2 = 3.485 (.69)	2 = 3.699 (.46)
	t (1044) = 1.357	t (1044) = -3.573**	t (1044) = -.526	t (1044) = .870	t (1044) = -1.667
Age					
1. 30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.249 (.68)	1 = 4.185 (.50)	1 = 3.022(.70)	1 = 3.479 (.68)	1 = 3.660 (.44)
2. Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.337 (.74)	2 = 4.201 (.56)	2 = 3.056 (.72)	2 = 3.514 (.73)	2 = 3.699 (.50)
	t (1034) = -1.975*	t (1009) = -.484	t (1034) = -.772	t (1034) = -.793	t (1009) = -1.310
Education Level					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.303 (.75)	1 = 4.162 (.60)	1 = 3.001 (.76)	1 = 3.527 (.80)	1 = 3.657 (.53)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.331 (.72)	2 = 4.246 (.49)	2 = 3.062 (.71)	2 = 3.517 (.72)	2 = 3.721 (.46)
3-Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.260 (.70)	3 = 4.147 (.55)	3 = 3.038 (.68)	3 = 3.464 (.64)	3 = 3.648 (.48)
	F (2,1040) = 1.019	F (2,1040) = 4.074*	F (2,1040) = .509	F (2,1040) = .758	F (2,1040) = 2.795
Monthly Personal Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.281 (.77)	1 = 4.256 (.54)	1 = 2.964 (.72)	1 = 3.567 (.77)	1 = 3.689 (.49)
2=10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.310 (.71)	2 = 4.167 (.50)	2 = 3.060 (.70)	2 = 3.516 (.69)	2 = 3.676 (.46)
	t (577) = -.349	t (577) = 1.513	t (577) = -1.191	t (577) = .635	t (577) = .242
Neglected when young					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.369 (.75)	1 = 4.252 (.54)	1 = 3.132 (.74)	1 = 3.592 (.74)	1 = 3.751 (.50)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 3.288 (.71)	2 = 4.189 (.53)	2 = 3.025 (.70)	2 = 3.484 (.69)	2 = 3.672 (.47)
	t (1016) = 1.324	t (1016) = 1.403	t (1016) = 1.789	t (222) = 1.752	t (1016) = 1.944
Family					
Number of children below 16					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.334 (.72)	1 = 4.216 (.50)	1 = 3.061 (.70)	1 = 3.526 (.70)	1 = 3.707 (.46)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.244 (.71)	2 = 4.159 (.58)	2 = 3.010 (.72)	2 = 3.453 (.72)	2 = 3.643 (.50)
	t (1044) = 1.974*	t (1044) = 1.707	t (1044) = 1.138	t (1044) = 1.639	t (1044) = 2.108*
Monthly Family Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.336 (.77)	1 = 4.208 (.74)	1 = 3.095 (.85)	1 = 3.485 (.86)	1 = 3.712 (.61)
2=10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.306 (.72)	2 = 4.203 (.50)	2 = 3.053 (.70)	2 = 3.512 (.71)	2 = 3.691 (.47)
	t (837) = .327	t (70) = .056	t (73) = .388	t (73) = -.253	t (72) = .268
CSSA					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.294 (.81)	1 = 4.191 (.60)	1 = 3.052 (.85)	1 = 3.618 (.70)	1 = 3.682 (.57)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.300 (.72)	2 = 4.197 (.53)	2 = 3.040 (.71)	2 = 3.493 (.71)	2 = 3.684 (.48)
	t (1035) = -.049	t (1035) = -.059	t (1035) = .089	t (1035) = 1.006	t (1035) = -.018

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .010

4.3.7.2 Police Intervention

According to Table 10 on p.62, respondents' education level is a significant factor in determining their preference for police intervention in all types of child neglect cases. It is found that the more education respondents received, the less their preference for police intervention. On the other hand, preference for police intervention in cases of educational neglect is most susceptible to differences in demographic background of the respondents among the four types of child neglect cases. Male respondents, respondents who are 30 or below, those who are more educated and with a monthly income of HK\$10,000 or more per month are more resistant to police intervention in educational neglect cases. For cases of emotional neglect, those who are more educated and those with a monthly income of HK\$10,000 or more are also more hesitant of police intervention.

4.3.7.3 Assistance by Neighbors

Table 11 on p.63 shows the preference of neighbor intervention does not vary with respect to respondents' demographic background. The only exception is that respondents reported having been neglected when they were young showed a stronger preference for neighbor intervention in emotional neglect cases. Based on the results presented, it is clear that there is no statistically significant relationship between respondents' preference for neighbor intervention and their demographic backgrounds. The view of respondents on neighbor intervention in different forms of child neglect cases is rather homogenous.

4.3.7.4 Help by Relatives

Table 12 on p.64 presents the bivariate analysis on the demographic background and their preference for help by relative in child neglect cases. The results show that the age and education level of respondents are significant factors affecting their preference for help by relatives in different types of child neglect. Older respondents favor help by relatives significantly more than younger respondents do in cases of physical, educational and emotional child neglect. On the other hand, respondents who are better educated are significantly more reserved over help by the relatives in all forms of child neglect. Lastly, respondents reported having been neglected when young show less preference for relatives' help in cases of emotional neglect.

Table 10 : Respondents' demographic background and their views on police intervention in different forms of child neglect

	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Respondent					
<i>Gender</i>					
1. Male (n=338)	1 = 3.175 (.76)	1 = 2.945 (.83)	1 = 2.165 (.54)	1 = 2.524 (.69)	1 = 2.807 (.61)
2. Female (n=708)	2 = 3.170 (.73)	2 = 3.169 (.81)	2 = 2.178 (.52)	2 = 2.583 (.74)	2 = 2.921 (.59)
	t (1044) = .103	t (1044) = -4.147**	t (1044) = -.365	t (705) = -1.263	t (1044) = -2.885**
<i>Age</i>					
1. 30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.163 (.72)	1 = 3.035 (.81)	1 = 2.162 (.52)	1 = 2.548 (.72)	1 = 2.849 (.57)
2. Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.179 (.76)	2 = 3.142 (.83)	2 = 2.178 (.52)	2 = 2.573 (.73)	2 = 2.910 (.61)
	t (1034) = -.351	t (1034) = -2.081*	t (1034) = -.500	t (1034) = -.536	t (1034) = -1.653
<i>Education Level</i>					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.244 (.80)	1 = 3.237 (.86)	1 = 2.327 (.67)	1 = 2.767 (.83)	1 = 3.011 (.67)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.226 (.73)	2 = 3.148 (.81)	2 = 2.189 (.49)	2 = 2.571 (.72)	2 = 2.928 (.58)
3-Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.074 (.71)	3 = 2.967 (.81)	3 = 2.082 (.47)	3 = 2.458 (.67)	3 = 2.772 (.57)
	F (2,1040) = 5.590**	F (2,1040) = 8.502**	F (2,1040) = 14.482**	F (2,1040) = 11.690**	F (2,1040) = 12.398**
<i>Monthly Personal Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.236 (.74)	1 = 3.315 (.84)	1 = 2.270 (.55)	1 = 2.635 (.74)	1 = 3.034 (.61)
2=10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.185 (.72)	2 = 3.020 (.81)	2 = 2.128 (.47)	2 = 2.510 (.70)	2 = 2.838 (.56)
	t (577) = .617	t (577) = 3.133**	t (112) = 2.286*	t (577) = 1.536	t (577) = 2.971**
<i>Neglected when young</i>					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.250 (.76)	1 = 3.168 (.85)	1 = 2.244 (.52)	1 = 2.655 (.75)	1 = 2.958 (.62)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 3.161 (.74)	2 = 3.086 (.82)	2 = 2.162 (.53)	2 = 2.543 (.72)	2 = 2.874 (.59)
	t (1016) = 1.405	t (1016) = 1.179	t (1016) = 1.833	t (1016) = 1.805	t (1016) = 1.649
Family					
<i>Number of children below 16</i>					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.201 (.75)	1 = 3.121 (.83)	1 = 2.174 (.54)	1 = 2.581 (.74)	1 = 2.904 (.60)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.124 (.72)	2 = 3.057 (.82)	2 = 2.173 (.51)	2 = 2.537 (.71)	2 = 2.853 (.60)
	t (1044) = 1.648	t (1044) = 1.228	t (1044) = .015	t (1044) = .957	t (1044) = 1.356
<i>Monthly Family Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.188 (.78)	1 = 3.390 (.78)	1 = 2.273 (.67)	1 = 2.750 (.78)	1 = 3.060 (.62)
2=10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.196 (.75)	2 = 3.085 (.83)	2 = 2.166 (.50)	2 = 2.570 (.73)	2 = 2.883 (.60)
	t (837) = -.083	t (837) = 2.871**	t (71) = 1.263	t (837) = 1.914	t (837) = 2.300*
<i>CSSA</i>					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.082 (.76)	1 = 3.265 (.79)	1 = 2.221 (.63)	1 = 2.691 (.82)	1 = 2.958 (.59)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.176 (.74)	2 = 3.093 (.83)	2 = 2.171 (.52)	2 = 2.559 (.73)	2 = 2.883 (.60)
	t (1035) = -.721	t (1035) = 1.194	t (1035) = .546	t (1035) = 1.044	t (1035) = .717

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .01

Table 11 : Respondents' demographic background and their views on assistance by neighbors in different forms of child neglect

	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Respondent					
<i>Gender</i>					
1. Male (n=338)	1 = 3.475 (.66)	1 = 3.406 (.86)	1 = 2.893 (.78)	1 = 3.636 (.71)	1 = 2.295 (.68)
2. Female (n=708)	2 = 3.528 (.67)	2 = 3.415 (.85)	2 = 2.887 (.70)	2 = 3.678 (.69)	2 = 3.312 (.68)
	t (1044) = -1.196	t (1044) = -.162	t (1044) = .103	t (1044) = -.897	t (1044) = -.367
<i>Age</i>					
1. 30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.476 (.66)	1 = 3.399 (.82)	1 = 2.875 (.77)	1 = 3.672 (.65)	1 = 3.287 (.65)
2. Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.535 (.68)	2 = 3.419 (.88)	2 = 2.900 (.81)	2 = 3.662 (.74)	2 = 3.318 (.70)
	t (1034) = -1.420	t (1034) = -.368	t (1034) = -.492	t (1008) = .229	t (993) = -.734
<i>Education Level</i>					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.495 (.75)	1 = 3.380 (.94)	1 = 2.884 (.83)	1 = 3.678 (.82)	1 = 3.285 (.77)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.515 (.66)	2 = 3.465 (.84)	2 = 2.884 (.78)	2 = 3.690 (.68)	2 = 3.332 (.67)
3= Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.515 (.63)	3 = 3.363 (.83)	3 = 2.902 (.79)	3 = 3.632 (.65)	3 = 3.286 (.64)
	F (2,1040) = .070	F (2,1040) = 1.644	F (2,1040) = .057	F (2,1040) = .781	F (2,1040) = .609
<i>Monthly Personal Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.566 (.72)	1 = 3.438 (.89)	1 = 2.871 (.76)	1 = 3.781 (.70)	1 = 3.328 (.70)
2= 10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.513 (.67)	2 = 3.421 (.84)	2 = 2.894 (.79)	2 = 3.659 (.69)	2 = 3.312 (.67)
	t (577) = .686	t (577) = .171	t (577) = -.255	t (577) = 1.531	t (577) = .206
<i>Neglected when young</i>					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.555 (.71)	1 = 3.464 (.90)	1 = 3.038 (.80)	1 = 3.720 (.75)	1 = 3.380 (.73)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 5.506 (.66)	2 = 3.416 (.84)	2 = 3.866 (.79)	2 = 3.665 (.68)	2 = 3.301 (.67)
	t (1016) = .865	t (1016) = .654	t (1016) = 2.558*	t (1016) = .931	t (1016) = 1.374
Family					
<i>Number of children below 16</i>					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.518 (.66)	1 = 3.403 (.86)	1 = 2.866 (.78)	1 = 3.652 (.70)	1 = 3.298 (.68)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.500 (.68)	2 = 3.426 (.85)	2 = 2.926 (.81)	2 = 3.683 (.69)	2 = 3.320 (.68)
	t (1044) = .430	t (1044) = -.422	t (1044) = -1.192	t (1044) = -.695	t (1044) = -.508
<i>Monthly Family Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.458 (.80)	1 = 3.345 (1.05)	1 = 2.894 (.79)	1 = 3.595 (.91)	1 = 3.260 (.83)
2= 10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.526 (.67)	2 = 3.409 (.85)	2 = 2.904 (.80)	2 = 3.677 (.69)	2 = 3.312 (.68)
	t (837) = -.785	t (72) = -.487	t (837) = -.094	t (72) = -.717	t (73) = -.494
<i>CSSA</i>					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.659 (.65)	1 = 3.493 (.97)	1 = 2.860 (.87)	1 = 3.669 (.73)	1 = 3.376 (.73)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.507 (.67)	2 = 3.407 (.85)	2 = 2.890 (.79)	2 = 3.664 (.70)	2 = 3.303 (.68)
	t (1.035) = 1.304	t (1.035) = .573	t (1.035) = -.217	t (1.035) = .040	t (1.035) = .618

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .01

Table 12 : Respondents' demographic background and their views on help by relatives in different forms of child neglect

	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Respondent					
<i>Gender</i>					
1=Male (n=338)	1 = 3.385 (.71)	1 = 3.108 (.93)	1 = 2.607 (.77)	1 = 3.218 (.81)	1 = 3.052 (.73)
2=Female (n=708)	2 = 3.369 (.72)	2 = 3.047 (.92)	2 = 2.554 (.76)	2 = 3.138 (.84)	2 = 3.004 (.73)
	t (1044) = .343	t (1044) = .995	t (1044) = 1.052	t (1044) = 1.438	t (1044) = .988
<i>Age</i>					
1=30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.298 (.69)	1 = 2.998 (.89)	1 = 2.515 (.74)	1 = 3.116 (.81)	1 = 2.952 (.70)
2=Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.431 (.73)	2 = 3.113 (.94)	2 = 2.612 (.78)	2 = 3.198 (.85)	2 = 3.067 (.75)
	t (1034) = -2.975**	t (1034) = -1.997*	t (984) = -2.041*	t (1034) = -1.571	t (1034) = -2.523*
<i>Education Level</i>					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.462 (.78)	1 = 3.149 (.94)	1 = 2.705 (.82)	1 = 3.253 (.88)	1 = 3.116 (.77)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.396 (.71)	2 = 3.129 (.93)	2 = 2.595 (.76)	2 = 3.200 (.83)	2 = 3.062 (.74)
3=Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.307 (.70)	3 = 2.948 (.89)	3 = 2.479 (.74)	3 = 3.078 (.80)	3 = 2.920 (.70)
	F (2,1040) = 3.302*	F (2,1040) = 5.075**	F (2,1040) = 5.967**	F (2,1040) = 3.574*	F (2,1040) = 6.063**
<i>Monthly Personal Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.423 (.82)	1 = 3.202 (.94)	1 = 2.666 (.76)	1 = 3.287 (.83)	1 = 3.123 (.76)
2=10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.376 (.71)	2 = 3.066 (.92)	2 = 2.545 (.74)	2 = 3.155 (.83)	2 = 3.013 (.72)
	t (577) = .559	t (577) = 1.280	t (577) = 1.400	t (577) = 1.377	t (577) = 1.309
<i>Neglected when young</i>					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.429 (.74)	1 = 3.159 (.95)	1 = 2.706 (.82)	1 = 3.259 (.85)	1 = 3.113 (.78)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 3.362 (.72)	2 = 3.050 (.92)	2 = 2.542 (.75)	2 = 3.149 (.83)	2 = 3.001 (.72)
	t (1016) = 1.095	t (1016) = 1.383	t (221) = 2.397*	t (1016) = 1.558	t (1016) = 1.806
Family					
<i>Number of children below 16</i>					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.387 (.71)	1 = 3.069 (.93)	1 = 2.567 (.77)	1 = 3.151 (.84)	1 = 3.023 (.73)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.354 (.73)	2 = 3.065 (.91)	2 = 2.579 (.77)	2 = 3.185 (.82)	2 = 3.015 (.73)
	t (1044) = .733	t (1044) = .068	t (1044) = -.249	t (1044) = -.649	t (1044) = .157
<i>Monthly Family Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.346 (.84)	1 = 3.053 (.99)	1 = 2.576 (.75)	1 = 3.182 (.89)	1 = 3.007 (.78)
2=10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.400 (.71)	2 = 3.066 (.92)	2 = 2.583 (.77)	2 = 3.165 (.83)	2 = 3.029 (.73)
	t (73) = -.514	t (837) = -.106	t (837) = -.068	t (837) = .160	t (837) = -.231
<i>CSSA</i>					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.477 (.71)	1 = 3.125 (.95)	1 = 2.552 (.79)	1 = 3.162 (.83)	1 = 3.070 (.72)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.372 (.72)	2 = 3.060 (.92)	2 = 2.570 (.77)	2 = 3.161 (.83)	2 = 3.016 (.73)
	t (1035) = .834	t (1035) = .402	t (1035) = -.139	t (1035) = .003	t (1035) = .422

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .01

4.3.8 Public Expectation on Formal Systems vs Informal Support Systems

A composite index was developed to indicate the respondents' preference for support and intervention by the formal and informal systems. The formal system here refers to support and intervention by social workers and police, and the informal system denotes support and intervention by relatives and neighbors. Table 13 shows that respondents seem to show a clear preference for informal system support and intervention in all except educational child neglect cases. Specifically, support and intervention by formal system is most preferred in educational neglect cases, and least welcome in emotional neglect cases. Support and intervention by informal system is most preferred in physical neglect cases and, again, least welcome in emotional neglect cases. Among the four types of child neglect, respondents tend most to leave emotionally neglectful families on their own. Support and intervention by both formal and informal systems is least preferred in cases of educational neglect.

Table 13: Preferred support/intervention by formal and informal systems (N=1046)

	Formal system Mean (SD)	Informal system Mean (SD)
Physical neglect	3.24 (.666)	3.44 (.657)
Educational neglect	3.65 (.576)	3.24 (.834)
Emotional neglect	2.61 (.529)	2.73 (.722)
Medical neglect	3.03 (.615)	3.41 (.694)

4.3.9 Expectation on Support Systems and Respondents Demographic Background

4.3.9.1 Formal Support and Intervention System

Table 14 on p.67 presents the demographic correlates of formal support system. The following observations can be made from the table :

- Respondents with more than one child under the age of 16 and those who are more educated are more resistant of support and intervention from the formal system in cases of physical neglect;

- Female respondents and those with higher personal and family income are more in favor of support and intervention from the formal system in cases of educational neglect;
- Compared with those who are less educated, respondents with higher education have a more reserved attitude over support and intervention from the formal system. This is true for all except cases of emotional neglect.

4.3.9.2 Informal Support and Intervention System

As can be seen from Table 15 on p.68, there is no consistently recognizable relationship preference for support and intervention by the informal system and the respondents' demographic background. However, based on the findings presented in Table 15, the following observations can be made.

- In cases of physical neglect, only the age of the respondents is a significant factor associating with preference for support and intervention by the informal system. Compared with the younger respondents, those who are over 30 years old seem to be more welcoming of informal support and intervention by relatives and neighbors in physical neglect cases.
- In cases of educational neglect, only the educational level of the respondents is a significant factor associating with preference for support and intervention by the informal system. In comparison with respondents with an education level of senior secondary or below, those with tertiary/university education seem to be less in favor of support and intervention from the informal system.
- In cases of emotional neglect, the only demographic background associating with preference for support and intervention by the informal system is whether or not the respondents reporting to have been neglected by parents when young. Respondents who reported having been neglected before are more in favor of support and intervention by the informal system.
- In cases of medical neglect, none of the demographic factors under study are correlated with respondents' preference for support and intervention by the informal system. This finding indicates that the views of the respondents over support and intervention by the informal system in medical neglect cases are relatively independent of their background.

Table 14 : Respondents' demographic background and their preference for formal intervention in different forms of child neglect

Respondent	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Gender					
3. Male (n=338)	1 = 3.259 (.68)	1 = 3.527 (.59)	1 = 2.595 (.55)	1 = 3.024 (.60)	1 = 3.227 (.49)
4. Female (n=708)	2 = 3.224 (.66)	2 = 3.702 (.56)	2 = 2.613 (.52)	2 = 3.034 (.62)	2 = 3.310 (.47)
	t (1044) = .788	t (1044) = -4.642**	t (1044) = -.533	t (1044) = -.229	t (1044) = -2.652**
Age					
1. 30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.206 (.63)	1 = 3.610 (.54)	1 = 2.592 (.52)	1 = 3.014 (.60)	1 = 3.254 (.45)
2. Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.258 (.69)	2 = 3.672 (.60)	2 = 2.617 (.53)	2 = 3.044 (.62)	2 = 3.305 (.49)
	t (1034) = -1.259	t (1034) = -1.710	t (1034) = -.767	t (1034) = -.773	t (1034) = -1.687
Education Level					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.273 (.71)	1 = 3.700 (.62)	1 = 2.664 (.64)	1 = 3.147 (.71)	1 = 3.334 (.54)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.279 (.67)	2 = 3.697 (.54)	2 = 2.626 (.51)	2 = 3.044 (.61)	2 = 3.325 (.45)
3-Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.167 (.64)	3 = 3.557 (.58)	3 = 2.560 (.49)	3 = 2.961 (.56)	3 = 3.210 (.46)
	F (2,1040) = 3.343*	F (2,1040) = 7.336**	F (2,1040) = 2.938	F (2,1040) = 5.992**	F (2,1040) = 7.423**
Monthly Personal Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.258 (.68)	1 = 3.785 (.58)	1 = 2.617 (.54)	1 = 3.101 (.65)	1 = 3.361 (.48)
2=10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.247 (.66)	2 = 3.594 (.55)	2 = 2.594 (.49)	2 = 3.013 (.60)	2 = 3.257 (.45)
	t (577) = .147	t (577) = 2.993**	t (577) = .393	t (577) = 1.259	t (577) = 2.005*
Neglected when young					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.309 (.69)	1 = 3.710 (.59)	1 = 2.688 (.53)	1 = 3.124 (.65)	1 = 3.354 (.49)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 3.225 (.66)	2 = 3.637 (.57)	2 = 2.593 (.53)	2 = 3.013 (.60)	2 = 3.273 (.47)
	t (1016) = 1.497	t (1016) = 1.499	t (1016) = 2.108*	t (1016) = 2.129*	t (1016) = 2.018*
Family					
Number of children below 16					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.268 (.68)	1 = 3.669 (.57)	1 = 2.617 (.53)	1 = 3.054 (.62)	1 = 3.306 (.47)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.184 (.65)	2 = 3.608 (.58)	2 = 2.592 (.53)	2 = 2.995 (.61)	2 = 3.248 (.49)
	t (1044) = 1.982*	t (1044) = 1.672	t (1044) = .770	t (1044) = 1.509	t (1044) = 1.913
Monthly Family Income					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.262 (.71)	1 = 3.799 (.62)	1 = 2.684 (.68)	1 = 3.117 (.72)	1 = 3.386 (.55)
2=10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.251 (.67)	2 = 3.644 (.57)	2 = 2.609 (.51)	2 = 3.041 (.61)	2 = 3.287 (.47)
	t (837) = .129	t (837) = 2.115*	t (71) = .865	t (73) = .829	t (837) = 1.618
CSSA					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.188 (.74)	1 = 3.728 (.59)	1 = 2.636 (.63)	1 = 3.154 (.67)	1 = 3.320 (.51)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.238 (.66)	2 = 3.645 (.58)	2 = 2.605 (.53)	2 = 3.026 (.62)	2 = 3.283 (.48)
	t (1035) = -.428	t (1035) = .828	t (1035) = .331	t (1035) = 1.196	t (1035) = .441

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .01

Table 15 : Respondents' demographic background and their preference for informal intervention in different forms of child neglect

	Physical Mean (SD)	Educational Mean (SD)	Emotional Mean (SD)	Medical Mean (SD)	NEGLECT Mean (SD)
Respondent					
<i>Gender</i>					
1=Male (n=338)	1 = 3.430 (.65)	1 = 3.257 (.84)	1 = 2.750 (.72)	1 = 3.427 (.70)	1 = 3.174 (.67)
2=Female (n=708)	2 = 3.448 (.66)	2 = 3.231 (.83)	2 = 2.721 (.72)	2 = 3.408 (.69)	2 = 3.158 (.66)
	t (1044) = -.421	t (1044) = .466	t (1044) = .614	t (1044) = .409	t (1044) = .355
<i>Age</i>					
1=30 or below (n=445)	1 = 3.387 (.63)	1 = 3.199 (.79)	1 = 2.695 (.70)	1 = 3.394 (.65)	1 = 3.120 (.63)
2=Above 30 (n=591)	2 = 3.483 (.67)	2 = 3.266 (.86)	2 = 2.756 (.74)	2 = 3.430 (.73)	2 = 3.193 (.69)
	t (1034) = -2.348*	t (1034) = -1.292	t (1034) = -1.340	t (1003) = -.841	t (997) = -1.776
<i>Education Level</i>					
1= Junior secondary and below (n=188)	1 = 3.478 (.73)	1 = 3.265 (.91)	1 = 2.795 (.78)	1 = 3.465 (.80)	1 = 3.201 (.74)
2= Senior secondary (n=469)	2 = 3.455 (.65)	2 = 3.297 (.83)	2 = 2.740 (.72)	2 = 3.445 (.68)	2 = 3.197 (.67)
3=Tertiary/university and above (n=386)	3 = 3.411 (.62)	3 = 3.155 (.80)	3 = 2.690 (.69)	3 = 3.355 (.65)	3 = 3.103 (.62)
	F (2,1040) = .807	F (2,1040) = 3.164*	F (2,1040) = 1.383	F (2,1040) = 2.394	F (2,1040) = 2.491
<i>Monthly Personal Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=89)	1 = 3.494 (.74)	1 = 3.320 (.88)	1 = 2.768 (.72)	1 = 3.534 (.70)	1 = 3.226 (.70)
2=10000 & above (n=490)	2 = 3.444 (.65)	2 = 3.244 (.83)	2 = 2.720 (.71)	2 = 3.407 (.69)	2 = 3.163 (.65)
	t (577) = .654	t (577) = .794	t (577) = .594	t (577) = 1.596	t (577) = .826
<i>Neglected when young</i>					
1=yes (n=165)	1 = 3.492 (.70)	1 = 3.311 (.88)	1 = 2.872 (.75)	1 = 3.489 (.75)	1 = 3.247 (.72)
2=no (n=853)	2 = 3.434 (.65)	2 = 3.233 (.82)	2 = 2.704 (.71)	2 = 3.407 (.68)	2 = 3.151 (.65)
	t (1016) = 1.039	t (1016) = 1.101	t (1016) = 2.748**	t (1016) = 1.406	t (219) = 1.578
Family					
<i>Number of children below 16</i>					
1= one child (n=639)	1 = 3.453 (.65)	1 = 3.236 (.84)	1 = 2.716 (.72)	1 = 3.401 (.70)	1 = 3.160 (.67)
2= 2 or more children (n=407)	2 = 3.427 (.67)	2 = 3.245 (.83)	2 = 2.752 (.73)	2 = 3.434 (.68)	2 = 3.167 (.66)
	t (1044) = .619	t (1044) = -.179	t (1044) = -.786	t (1044) = -.739	t (1044) = -.173
<i>Monthly Family Income</i>					
1= Below 10000 (n=66)	1 = 3.402 (.79)	1 = 3.199 (.96)	1 = 2.735 (.69)	1 = 3.388 (.84)	1 = 3.134 (.76)
2=10000 & above (n=773)	2 = 3.463 (.65)	2 = 3.238 (.83)	2 = 2.743 (.73)	2 = 3.421 (.69)	2 = 3.170 (.66)
	t (73) = -.616	t (837) = -.358	t (837) = -.088	t (73) = -.304	t (837) = -.427
<i>CSSA</i>					
1=yes (n=34)	1 = 3.568 (.62)	1 = 3.309 (.90)	1 = 2.706 (.75)	1 = 3.415 (.70)	1 = 3.223 (.68)
2=no (n=1003)	2 = 3.440 (.66)	2 = 3.234 (.83)	2 = 2.730 (.72)	2 = 3.413 (.70)	2 = 3.159 (.67)
	t (1035) = 1.120	t (1035) = .516	t (1035) = -.192	t (1035) = -.022	t (1035) = .547

Note : a : min=1, max=5; * p < .05; ** p < .01

4.4 Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the telephone survey, it seems that parents have a general consensus that certain needs are common for all children in Hong Kong (Section 4.3.3 refers). These include the need for food and clothing, the need for respect and recognition, the need for care and concern, the need for protection, the need for education, and the need for medical care. In this light, it is imperative that these needs of the children are adequately met, or it will violate the general expectation of the Hong Kong community in general, and that of the parents in Hong Kong in particular.

Another consensus among the parent respondents in this telephone survey is that they generally consider that parents have the responsibility to provide for different areas of needs of their children covered in this survey (Section 4.3.4 refers). The findings clearly show that parents should provide for the various basic needs of their children in the family. In other words, the overwhelming majority of respondents have clearly indicated hold their view that the families are the prime site, and parents the prime agents, in which children's needs are satisfied.

The generally high acceptance by parent respondents on various aspects of children's needs and their high rating of parental responsibility in fulfilling these needs could have been inflated by the social desirability of the content of question items. If the high scores reflect that it is socially desirable for the parents to acknowledge these children's needs and their responsibility to meet them, this would suggest the existence of public expectations on children's needs and parental responsibilities, as well as an acknowledgement by parent respondents of these public expectations.

Based on the findings on parental views on children's needs and parental responsibilities, as well as the weakening family functioning in the midst of rapid social changes which may affect them in discharging their parental responsibilities in the care of their children, parents with difficulties should be supported with appropriate measures and social services, rather than supplanted, in their roles as prime caregivers to provide for the basic needs of their children. Policies on parent and family support should be developed to strengthen parental competence and family functioning.

As findings in Section 4.3.5 show, parents' definition tendency in the vignettes of

this study is strongest among the physical forms of child neglect, and weakest in cases of emotional neglect. Since definitional tendency of respondents reflects that their awareness of child neglect, the results suggest that public awareness of physical neglect is highest, whereas their awareness of emotional neglect is lowest. It is worthy of attention that a disinclination to define emotionally neglectful behaviors of parents in terms of child neglect may indicate a higher tolerance and acceptance of these behaviors. This may mean that parents could be involved in these neglectful behaviors without knowing it. Moreover, low awareness and sensitivity to other forms of child neglect may hinder spontaneous help by relatives and neighbors, as well as reporting to the official agencies for assistance to the families concerned.

Public focus on the physical forms of child neglect is understandable because physically neglectful behaviors such as failure to provide adequate food and clothing, leaving children unattended, or lack of supervision are more directly observable, whereas failure to attend to children's psychological needs such as respect and recognition, care and concern, even if they are observable, are easily excusable. However, failure of parents to look after the psychological needs of children can also lead to impediments in physical growth and even nonorganic failure to thrive because all forms of child neglect are equally hurtful to the children. Therefore, there is a need to do more public education program to educate the harmful effects of different forms of child neglect.

Intervention in neglectful families is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, there is a need to be of help to neglectful families. For parents who have shown serious child neglectful behaviors, or who do not respond to help, there is a need to resort to the legal proceedings to make sure that the harmful effects of their child neglect behaviors do not perpetuate and that the welfare of their children is safeguarded. On the other hand, however, the public can be very sensitive to, if not skeptical of public intervention in these families, especially in the case of police intervention (Section 4.3.6 refers). Within the repertoire of responses to neglectful parents in Hong Kong, current practice seems to rely on police intervention as a last resort. This is supported by the findings of this telephone survey.

Social services and social work intervention to family at risk of child neglect is needed to support parents in fulfilling the responsibility in looking after their children. However, the findings of the telephone survey suggest that social work intervention is not

necessarily heralded in all types of child neglect, albeit it is a more generally acceptable form of help to the neglectful families. Having also regards to the expressed preference of the respondents for help given by the informal system to child neglect cases, the role of social workers should not be restricted to direct intervention in these families. They also have the role to develop, build up, and foster more nurturing and responsive informal networks to support families at risk of child neglect.

Lastly, the findings of this study also show that the background of the parent respondents do not generally affect their views on issues of child needs and child neglect in Hong Kong, except that younger parents are more hesitant of help by relatives, and more educated parents are more resistant of police intervention. This suggests that the views of parent respondents are relatively homogeneous in matters of children's needs, parental responsibilities, definitional tendency in child neglect, and types of intervention in neglectful families. Though not being an absolute consensus on these matters, this relative homogeneity of views suggests that we should do something about the child neglect problem in Hong Kong.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Study on “Parental Perspectives on Child Neglect in Hong Kong”

5.1 Introduction

The last three chapters review the essential literatures on child neglect, outline the approaches of other countries and places to deal with the problem, and reports the findings of the telephone survey on the views of parents on the problem and how it should be dealt with. This chapter presents findings of this study based on indepth interviews with the parents and social workers who work closely with the neglectful families. It is hoped that the findings of the telephone survey could be examined more indepth and in greater details with the informants who participated in this study.

5.2 Data Collection

5.2.1 *Informants*

The first sample consists of neglectful parents. The research team sent out invitation letters to the relevant government departments and NGOs requesting for referral of neglectful parents in August 2010. Up till February, only 5 cases of child neglect were referred by the social service agencies and interviewed by the research team. To identify cases with neglectful parenting, the research team contacted respondents in the telephone survey who reported to have been neglectful of their children, and/or those who were regarded to have been neglectful by other people. A total of 109 parents were identified, but only 39 of them indicated that they might accept an invitation for indepth interview with the researchers. These 39 parents were contacted, but only 5 of them finally agreed to come for an interview with the researchers. In the end, totally 10 neglectful parents were interviewed in this study.

The second sample consists of informants who are non-neglectful parents from different walks of life in Hong Kong. Recruited either from the telephone survey or through purposive/snowball sampling, these non-neglectful parents were interviewed for their more detailed understanding on their views of the child neglect problem and its management in Hong Kong. The information gathered from these non-neglectful parents

serves to complement that of the quantitative data gathered from the telephone survey, so that the depth, breadth, and richness of the parental perspectives on child neglect can be assured. In the end, a total of 17 non-neglectful parents were successfully interviewed.

The last sample consists of 13 social workers who have experience of working with neglectful families. These 13 social workers consists of those who work in the specialized child protection service, in agency specializing in domestic violence services, in integrated family service centres, and in school social services. Of these 13 social workers, 10 were referred to research team by their employing agencies and 3 participated in this study on personal capacity out of their own conviction for the neglected children. All informants were invited for the indepth interviews because of their experience in working with neglectful families.

The research team notes that the number of parents interviewed in this study fell short of the originally planned sample. Basically, the 10 neglectful parents and 17 non-neglectful parents have provided a good understanding of the parental views on child neglect and its interventions. Over this objective, the current parent sample has reached the point of saturation. However, the 10 neglectful parents might not be enough for a good grasp of the experiences and realities of neglectful families in Hong Kong. For this reason, all interviews with social workers have included a part to explore the life experiences of neglectful families which the social workers have handled. With this adjustment, the qualitative data collected from interviews with the parents and social workers have provided a good understanding of the objectives of the consultancy study.

5.2.2 *Methods*

For the parent informants, the interviews were conducted by the researcher or by the research assistants with the help of a set of semi-structured guide (See Appendix V and Appendix VI). The interviews lasted from about an hour to an hour and a half. With the exception of 3 cases, all interviews were conducted in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The interviews with social worker informants were more unstructured. The interviews focused on their experience in working with neglectful families as well as their views on the child neglect problem and its management. The interviews, which lasted from about 45 minutes to an hour, took place either in the working place of the

informants or in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

All interviews are audio-recorded. Each interview is analyzed with respect to its content. Field-notes were jotted to identify how information gathered from the interview may throw light on the understanding of the research topic. For the information-rich cases, they are transcribed verbatim for more detailed analysis. After all interviews are completed, themes were identified and drawn out to address the key questions and objectives of the study.

5.3. Findings of the Study

5.3.1 *Child Neglect and Its Causes*

Parenting experiences of neglectful parents are important information that facilitates understanding about the occurrence of child neglect. This understanding is crucial for designing and implementing appropriate services and strategies to protect children. It is worthy of mention that parenting is a learning process by which parents learn to be competent care-givers of their children. Parents who are new to parental jobs may make mistakes and overlook their children's basic needs at some points. For parents in the non-neglectful group, quite a number of them expressed that they have neglected their children before. These neglectful incidents are mostly leaving children unattended, or not talking to their children when they were too absorbed in their own matters. For most of these parents, they could usually become more competent in parenting with accumulated experience, knowledge and skills in childcare.

For some parents, their problems are more serious and chronic. They would need assistance in parenting for preventing child neglect. These cases warrant more of our attention. There is a need to know the causes that lead to child neglect in these cases so that appropriate help could be given to the families. Despite differences in informants' education background, economic status and life circumstances, from what is gathered from interviews with the parent and social worker informants, it is rather clear that parental awareness of child neglect, knowledge about children's needs, attitudes towards childcare, as well as options and resources available for alternative parenting are common factors that are attributable to the occurrence of the problem.

5.3.1.1. Lacking in Knowledge and Awareness of the Problem

Most of the parent informants show good knowledge of child neglect, especially for the non-neglectful parents. Parents who reported having experienced neglect in their childhood explicate a relatively higher awareness of child neglect and greater concern for the problem. For example,

Mrs. L revealed in the interview that she had become so concern about child neglect and desired to spend almost all time on her son because she got a feel about being neglected in her childhood: She thought that her parents had never shown care over her, and it made her feel abandoned as a child; since then, she had decided to put her greatest effort in fulfilling her child's needs, including physical needs, emotional needs, educational needs, social needs, moral needs and developmental needs. In order to prevent any neglect of her baby son's needs, she kept herself alert at night-time and slept for only 2-3 hours per day continuously for two years.

However, the level of awareness of child neglect was not the same among parent informants. While most of them were cautious of the problem, some were relatively ignorant of what child neglect is until they were accused of it. This is mostly true of the neglectful parents. It is not true that these parents had not heard of the term. However, they tend to think that this would not happen to their children. Besides, they generally fail to see that child neglect can be detrimental, and even fatal to their children. In the care of their children, these parents are less child-centred. They commonly lack an orientation to see risks and dangers associated with child neglect from the children's perspective.

5.3.1.2 Children's Needs and Parenting Competence

Parenting competence, or the lack of it, is closely related to the child neglect problem. In one way or another, parenting competence is associated with parents' knowledge of their children's needs. Based on the interview data, it is found that quite a number of child neglect incidents were actually caused by parents' lack of knowledge on children's needs and their deficiency in skills in parenting. Below are two excerpts illustrating this point.

'I once nearly drowned my daughter with a bucket of water.... I was sweeping

the floor of the corridor and left the water bucket on the floor of the dinning room...she crawled up the bucket and fell into the water.... I heard the noise and immediately went over to see what had happened.... I used not to know she could crawl so fast. You know, I just left the bucket for a second... Since then, I always reminded myself to put water bucket into the bath tub, making sure that it was out of reach of my baby daughter.' Said Mrs. I.

'I kept asking him (her son) to come with me, no matter I was heading to the market or doing any kind of shopping. However, he hated accompanying me to those places which are absolutely unattractive to him. He would rather stay at home for computer games. What should I do? I could not argue with him for ages and leave the housework behind. I have no choice, I must go and leave him there.' (The case of Mrs. T)

The demand on parenting is much greater for parents with a special child. The parenting competence of these parents cannot be improved with general knowledge and skills in parent education. For parents of children with special needs, like children with problems of cerebral palsy (CP), hyperactivity, and learning difficulties, they would encounter more and greater difficulties in caring for their children if they are without the special knowledge of their children's needs and problems and adequate support in parenting. The experience of Ms A illustrates this point.

Ms A found her son's behaviors increasingly unbearable, from flinging objects out of the window to throwing objects off the overhead bridge into the busy traffic underneath. She tried a variety of methods to control her son's behaviors, but of no avail. To stop her son's mischievous behaviours, she sometimes turned to use violence as well. However, it was only upon professional assessment that she knew that her son had problem of hyperactivity. Due to her lack of knowledge about her son's problem, she was unable to handle the problem of her son, rendering his needs for proper development unattended.

In sum, this qualitative study supports the common understanding that greater awareness of children's needs and responsiveness of parents to these needs are protective factors of child neglect. Lack of sensitivity to their children's needs and incompetence in parenting children are good predictors of occurrence of child neglect.

5.3.1.3 Divorced Families and Single Parents

Single parent families are vulnerable to child neglect. Some single parents are still suffering the psychological injury resulting from the marital breakdown. Preoccupied by the unhappy experience of marriage, these parents often could not spare additional energy and attention to the care of their children. A social worker shared a case of education neglect with the researcher,

‘...the father experienced a sudden marital breakdown which tore his heart apart so much so that he suffered from depression. Being drowned in his depressive moods, the father was unable to take care of himself, not to say the care of his child. He did not take the child to school, and the child also wanted to stick with him, and perhaps this gave him some kind of support in the absence of his wife. The father was just unable to pull himself out of his depression.’

Single parents commonly take care of their children without support from their spouse. As is often the case, these parents are easily torn by conflicting demands of a parent and other roles. In some circumstances, they are often left with no choice but to leave their children unattended at home. The problem is well exemplified by two cases below:

Ms L was deserted by her husband. She had a history of being abused by him before his desertion. As a single parent, she had to take care of three children entirely on her own. She had a son with cerebral palsy, who was often attacked by episodes of fit. When this happened, she had to send him to the hospital for emergency treatment. She admitted to have left her very young daughter unattended at home at mid-night when she had to escort her CP son to the emergency department of the hospital because the ambulance man refused to let young daughter to board on the ambulance. Under the circumstances, she had no choice but to leave young daughter alone at home.

Ms Y divorced her husband because of his addiction to gambling and wenching despite the financial hardships of the family. She was granted the custody of her young son; however, her husband refused to provide maintenance. Therefore, Ms Y must work part-time to earn income for the

family and take care of her son at the same time. She was often caught between the conflicting demand of an employee and that of a parent. She signed, 'I understand that he needs listening. As a mum, I should talk to him and try to attend to his ups and downs. However, you know, sometimes my mind was fully occupied by other things like how to find money to hire a tutor, what to do with my jobs, rents...etc. I just had no energy to take care of his hearts.'

In the single parent families, the flexibility of a two-parent family in child care is often absent. As the number of divorce families is rising, so is the number of single parent families. If single parent families are more vulnerable to problem of child care, they are also more vulnerable to child neglect in the same vein. Assistance to single parents with difficulties in child care is important in preventing child neglect.

5.3.1.4 Financial Hardship and Long Working Hours

Some parent informants were suffering from financial hardships when the incidents of child neglect took place. These parents expressed that they did not have the intention to neglect their children; however, in order not to starve their children or to stop them from receiving education, they must leave home for work to earn income. The following excerpt of Mr. W typically represents the views of working parents that child neglect is a necessary evil in families living from hands to mouth:

'I have to work at night time, coming back home in the early morning. My wife has to work from the early morning to the afternoon. She left before I returned home. This is the way we earn our living. Of course I know there is time that children are left home without adult supervision. But I have no choice.' (Mr. W)

Parents like Mr. W are not uncommon; they are not willing to live on the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). They prefer to live on their own meager earning. These parents work from day and night in order to feed the family. A saying is always on their lips, 'hands off, mouths off (*shou ting kou ting*).' For other families, the amount of CSSA is not enough to keep them afloat. This is typically the case where the children are permanent residents in Hong Kong, while the mother is a new immigrant not eligible for CSSA. In these families, the CSSA for the children has to

support the mother as well. Not being able to make both ends meet, the mothers of these families are left with no choice but to leave their children home and work outside.

5.3.1.5 Unresponsive Social Policies and Services

Social service responses are efforts to meet needs of people and their families. However, no social services are equally beneficial to all families in need. The CSSA scheme, for instance, has been supporting more than 282,698 families with a total 464,839 recipients as of January 2011.⁸ However, the existing policy of CSSA is that a new immigrant without a permanent resident status in Hong Kong is not eligible for assistance. A number of social worker informants testified that this policy has forced many new immigrant parents to seek paid job. In a lot of these families, the children are still young but are left to their own care at home.

Child neglect could be avoided if appropriate child care services are available to families at risk. In the past two decades, a number of relevant services have been developed. These include the occasional child care service, the extended hour service, the mutual help child care centre, and the neighborhood support child care project. For the high-risk families, children are commonly placed in small group home or foster care services. However, a lot of cases involve working parents leaving older children at home with risk of harm not so clear to themselves. Some parents would place their children under the after-school service of the integrated children and youth centres, some place them under the neighborhood support child care service. However, neither service could completely prevent child neglect.

Based on feedback by social worker informants, the after-school service usually ends at 8:00 pm while the neighborhood support child care is only available to children who are under 6 years of age and the service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 pm. The service is not available to older children and is neither able to meet the needs of many working parents who leave their work after 10 pm, like those who work in the retail service, in the restaurants, estate management services which their employees to work late at night or even overnight. The case of Ms. Y illustrates the limitations of the services:

⁸ http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_socsecu/sub_statistics/; (accessed on 25.2.2011)

Ms Y is a waitress. She works from 10:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. the next morning, or from 1:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. midnight. She could not find a job that allows her both to earn income and to take care of her children. Therefore, getting employed put Ms Y into a dilemma - either earning money to support her children or risking the commission of child neglect.

Besides, as pointed out by a number of social worker informants, childcare services available in the community are not free of charge and the charge often takes up a significant part of parents' wage. To take the neighborhood support child care service as example again. The service charges HKD\$18/hour. However, the minimum wage of workers in Hong Kong effective from May 2011 is only HKD\$28. This means the parents could at best earn HKD\$10/hour. Discounting the costs on food and transportation, the service is therefore not attractive to the parents. Certainly, relatives and friends appear to be more handy resources for parents in filling childcare gaps. However, parents who are new arrivals commonly do not have relatives and friends to count on. It is hard for them to get someone reliable to help take care of their children in times of need.

5.3.1.6 Cultural Factors

The number of cross border marriage has been rapidly increasing, from 16,451 in 1986 to 26,203 in 2007. For those marriage registered in Hong Kong, the number increases from 782 in 1986 to 18,387 in 2007, reflecting an increase of 38.7%. Most of these cross border marriages involve male Hong Kong residents marrying female residents in the mainland, with increasing trend from 15,776 in 1986 to 21,888 in 2007.⁹ Currently, the immigration policy of Hong Kong allows the Mainland spouse of Hong Kong residents to migrate to Hong Kong for the purpose of family reunion. The culture in which these Mainland mothers were brought up is very different from that in Hong Kong, and this is often a cause of child neglect in our society.

In a lot of cases presented to the researchers during interviews with the social worker informants, the problem of child neglect is more commonly found among the new immigrant parents from the Chinese Mainland. These new immigrants were brought up without being closely attended to during their childhood, and they are accustomed to

⁹ Family and Community Service in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Council of Social Services, available at: http://www.hkcss.org.hk/download/folder/fc/fc_eng.htm; (accessed on 28.2.2011)

leaving their children unattended in their homeland. This is particularly the case for those who were of rural origin before migrating to Hong Kong, a metropolitan city where life and its risks are so much different from their place of origin. The influence of cultural factors on child neglect is typified by the case of Mrs. T below:

Mrs. T attributed her unawareness of child neglect to the culture that she was grown in. She was brought up in Hunan rural area, in which children were normally left alone on themselves and were allowed to play everywhere in the village. She recalled the memory that she had to take care of his new born brother when she was at the age of 5-6. She accepted that this was the way children should be brought up. To her, sole responsibility of parents was to guarantee the supply of sufficient food, clothes and housing. Child neglect constituted by unattended emotional and developmental needs of children was something out of her imagination.

The view of Mrs. T was strongly echoed by Ms. A, a divorced woman now taking care of 11-year-old. At the time of this research study, she was receiving counseling service at a specialized child protection service agency in Hong Kong.

Ms. A expressed that leaving children to their own care for short period of time is a common practice in the Sichuan province where she was brought up. She did not know that this is unacceptable in Hong Kong. This was one of the reasons why her family was brought to the attention of social service agency. Upon counseling, the concept of child neglect began to haunt her mind. Later on, she read stories of family tragedies involving unattended children who fell from high and lost their lives. She knows that the life of children in Hong Kong is very different from that of those living in the Mainland. Therefore, she decided to quit her job and live on CSSA so that she can take care of her son. Her son is now 11-year-old. She had thought of taking up some part-time jobs. However, she is still hesitating to do so because she knows that her son is now at risk of the undesirable influence of his peers. If she does not attend to his needs and supervise him closely, he may run wayward.

It has taken a few years for Ms. A to know and tune in to the expectations of a parent in Hong Kong. During interviews with the social workers, a lot of similar cases were

presented to the researcher. Unfortunately, not all immigrant parents have developed this understanding, and their culture of “heaven gives lives; hence it will bring them up” (*tian sheng tian yang*) continues to contribute incidents of child neglect from time to time as they parent their children. Fortunate is that not all incidents of child neglect, whether they are brought to the attention of the professionals or not, are seriously injurious or fatal to the children. However, these neglectful incidents in child care are basically unacceptable according to the mainstream view of the Hong Kong society.

5.3.1.7 Irresponsibility in Parenting

The factors associating with child neglect presented above may have painted a picture that parents are victims of their own background and of the social and culture circumstances with which they have little control. However, there is a group of parents of whom both parent informants and social work informants seriously disapproved, if not condemned. These are parents who show little or no sense of responsibility for the children. This group of irresponsible parents merits attention of our community as the approach to deal with the child neglect problem in these families may not be the same as other neglectful parents.

Based on data collected from the qualitative interviews, irresponsibility in parenting is manifest in what can be termed a parent-centredness with a complete disregard for their children’s needs. For some of these parents, they may have some knowledge of what a child needs, and also the danger of not attending to these needs. However, they just choose not to care about the possibility of danger and risk associating with their neglectful parenting. For others, they may not have the knowledge required of a parent. Their irresponsibility in parenting is, however, manifest in their lack of responsiveness to professional counseling, refusal for intervention, or paying lip service to advice for improving in parenting.

The parent-centredness of the irresponsible parents, according to the parent and social work informants, is commonly indicated in parents’ indulgence in playing mahjong without cooking for their children or leaving them unattended at night time, parents leaving Hong Kong for gambling in Macau, and those seeking recreation (like massage) in Shenzhen or elsewhere on the other side of the border. Perception of these irresponsible parents is even stronger if the children being neglected are very young in age and left behind at night. Due to easy cross-border transportation, the number of

irresponsible and risking parents is increasing rapidly, which is therefore a cause for concern in Hong Kong.

5.3.1.8 Summary on Child Neglect and its Causes

This section has presented different scenarios of child neglect in Hong Kong. These scenarios are based on interviews with parents who have neglected their children and on child neglect cases handled by the social worker informants of this study. While these scenarios may not have depicted a full picture of the child neglect problem in Hong Kong, they are believed to have thrown light on the realities of the neglectful families and their causes. For the purpose of this study, it is enough to point out at this juncture that the problem of child neglect is multi-faceted, and it is also multi-causal, involving factors at the parent level, family level, service and policy level. Being a complex problem in itself, it has no simple solution. It will require the collaborative efforts of different professionals and a variety of interventions for its prevention and remedy.

5.3.2 *Parental Views on Intervention in Child Neglect Cases*

With the exception of those who are completely irresponsible, most of the neglectful parents are found to have been struggling to meet public expectations of their roles as parents. Some may have been neglectful as a result of their lack of experience, knowledge, skills and resources in parenting and child. However, most of them are able to make improvement with appropriate assistance. This study has interviewed parent informants who have been neglectful before. The parenting difficulties and experience of these neglectful parents provide an insider view on the difficulties faced by them. Together with other parent informants, they help to throw light on intervention and the threshold of intervention in the neglectful families, and illuminate the design of policy and practice that could help preventing the problem. .

The threshold intervention in neglectful families was explored with the parent informants. The concept of threshold of intervention essentially addresses the questions of who and when to intervene under what circumstances. It should not be assumed that the threshold is clear-cut line demarcating intervention and non-intervention. The line, if there is one, is affected by a host of factors. Based on interviews with the neglectful parents, considerations in seeking help from the formal and informal system are sought. These considerations serve to remind the child protection professionals that sensitivity to

the factors in neglectful parents is essential in intervening in child neglect families.

5.3.2.1 Threshold of Intervention in Child Neglect Cases

The views of the parent informants on intervention are closely related to their understanding of the children's needs and the child neglect problem. For parent informants with clear priority of children's needs, they usually have a corresponding priority of different types of child neglect in terms of their severity. On the contrary, for parent informants without a clear priority of children's needs, no clear structure can be identified in their views. These parent informants tend to make judgment on a case by case basis, but apparently, their views are affected by their perceived sense of responsibility of the neglectful parents in childcare.

a. Parents with clear priority of children's needs and child neglect

Parents commonly agree that children have needs for food and shelter, supervision, recognition and psychological care, education, and medical attention. However, some parents show a clear priority in their understanding of children's needs, and their priority is usually manifest in the descending order of importance: "survival needs", "health needs", "educational needs", and other needs (moral needs, social needs, developmental needs etc.). This order mirrors their understanding of different types of child neglect which listed in ascending order of seriousness: "unattended needs that may cost a child's life", "unattended needs that may cause health and mental problems", "education neglect", and others, like emotional disturbances, sickness, and home work assistance.

From the view of these parents, the survival needs of children are fundamental. Omission of necessities for the survival needs of children is considered as the most severe form of child neglect. This includes starving children, exposing children to fatally dangerous and poisonous materials etc. In regard to health needs and educational needs, two orders of importance are found in each category to differentiate fundamental needs and non-fundamental needs of children. Protection from physical and mental disability is counted as higher order health needs of children; meanwhile, supplementary nutrition for children is categorized as lower order health needs of children. Not attending to the higher order needs by parents are perceived as severe child neglect, whereas not attending to the lower order needs is considered less unacceptable.

In dealing with the more severe forms of child neglect, the parent informants believe that intervention by the formal systems, such as social worker and the police, should be needed. Nonetheless, a milder form of intervention by the formal system is always preferred. For instance, social work intervention is commonly preferred to police intervention; and where police intervention is needed, warning and cautioning of the neglectful parents is preferred to prosecuting them.

Parents commonly expect that social workers to work closely with these neglectful parents, to improve their knowledge on children's needs, raise their awareness and sensitivity to harm of child neglect to their children, provide the needed support to the families, and see to it that the needs of children are adequately met in order to prevent any possible occurrence of severe child neglect in these families in the future. Knowing that police intervention is a necessary evil in some child neglect cases, the parents are of the view that prosecution should be avoided. In their views, police should prosecute the parents if their neglectful parenting behaviors have amounted to an offence that leads to fatality or serious injury of their child; in cases where no fatality or serious physical injury is resulted, they should have the discretion not to prosecute the parent(s)-in-question; if this is the case, they should stop the neglect by referring the case to the social services for assistance and social work intervention.

For the milder forms of child neglect (i.e. non-severe child neglect), intervention by the formal system, be it police or social workers, is normally not preferred, if not wholly unwelcome. Parents prefer the assistance of informal systems, such as help from relatives, friends and neighbours, to help resolving their problems. Besides, some parent informants believe that intervention by formal system is not needed because, for some neglectful parents, self-adjustment and improvement in childcare is sufficient to prevent the mild forms of child neglect. Only when the mild forms of neglect take place frequently and consistently in childcare that formal intervention is considered to be necessary.

b. Parents without clear priority of children's needs and child neglect

Parents who do not have clear structured priority of children's needs and child neglects tend to rely on other criteria in determining whether a neglectful case should be intervened by formal systems. The criteria emerge from data are three duals, namely, "*intentional neglect vs unintentional neglect*", "*parent-centeredness vs child-centeredness*" and "*consistent neglect—snap-shot neglect*". These criteria are

used by the parent informants to judge the sense of responsibility of neglectful parents, so as to determine the type of intervention needed for them.

In regard to the terminology of the duals, 'intentional neglect' refers to child neglect committed by parents who are aware that the ways of their parenting may constitute child neglect; whereas 'unintentional neglect' is to describe child neglect committed by parents who do not have the knowledge about the dangers and risks of the ways they do parenting. 'Parent-centeredness' represents the parents are more self-centred than focusing on the needs of children in their parenting; in contrast, 'child-centredness' refers to parents who focus on the needs and benefits of the children. The last dual, 'consistent neglect - snap-shot neglect', is the measure of frequency of child neglect taking place in a family; the more often child neglect occurs, the more likely are the parents considered as irresponsible.

Based on these duals, "intentionally neglectful", "consistently neglectful" and "parent-centered" parents were considered to have the lowest sense of responsibility in childcare; hence being considered to be in much greater need for formal intervention. On the other hand, parents who have neglected the needs of children but are found 'unintentionally neglectful', 'snap-shot neglectful' and 'child-centered', are not considered to be irresponsible parents. For these parents, police intervention is perceived inappropriate and social work intervention is more welcome. In reality, parents are characterized by more complex combinations of the duals where it is hard to judge if they are completely responsible or irresponsible. Depending on the combinations of the duals characterizing the parents, different forms of intervention are preferred.

From interviews with parent informants, it is rather obvious that intervention by informal system is preferred irrespective of sense of responsibility of the parents. Informants thought that intimate friends and relatives were better resources than strange helpers from the formal systems, as it would be easier for them to share feelings, take suitable advice and timely assistance to meet their needs in child care. Some informants considered that neighbourhood support is important. However, where the help needed is more long-term, they think that it is better for the families to turn to the formal system for assistance. Besides, the informants know that neighbour relationships nowadays are increasingly detached; therefore, they saw the limitations in seeking assistance from neighbours.

As far as intervention by the formal intervention systems is concerned, informants commonly agreed that it is needed for child neglect cases caused by irresponsibility in parenting. In reverse, formal intervention is not always necessary in child neglect cases in which the parents were found to have a satisfactory sense of responsibility. Questions arise as to why parents with a good sense of responsibility are neglectful in taking care of their children. Some informants attribute the problem to the lack of options in parenting and lack of knowledge about childcare, hence, they think that instead of police intervention, other supportive strategies, like public education programs, parenting support, and financial assistance by the government are more welcome.

Despite a strong disapproval of child neglect among the parent informants, it can be easily seen that intervention by informal systems are more welcome for the prevention and remedy of child neglect. However, the thresholds for formal intervention are different between parents with and without a clear priority of children's needs and type of child neglect. For parents with a clear priority of children's needs and the types of child neglect, the threshold for formal intervention is markedly determined by the occurrence of severe child neglect; for those without this priority, it is determined by proof of the lack of responsibility on the neglectful parents in terms of their intentionality, self-centredness, and consistency in committing child neglect.

When police is inevitably involved in child neglect cases, a number of informants expressed that warning and compulsory parental education are more preferred to arrest and prosecution at the first offence of child neglect. In addition, some neglectful parent informants expressed a fear of social work intervention for being accusative and punitive, like taking away their parental rights and blaming them for child neglect without understanding their difficulties in parenting. Therefore, social work interventions are expected to be supportive and helpful to neglectful parents, to provide them with knowledge and resources to take good care of their children and to equip them with competence to be good parents. The supportive of social workers is even more relevant to neglectful parents who have satisfactory sense of responsibility in childcare. It is because these parents are struggling to be competent parents but fail. They have the qualities ready to be developed into competent parents, just that lack awareness of child neglect, knowledge and abilities in childcare and/or training to see things from children's perspective.

‘I understood that leaving children at home was not right, and it might constitute something called “child neglect” here in Hong Kong. However, I used not to be so aware of the potential danger of it... I did that occasionally when I had to leave home at emergency... Of course, I haven’t left my son home alone since I have learnt how danger it could be from social workers. They help me to understand the consequence... just like falling out of the windows and burning himself etc. I read these stories from the newspaper; therefore I know it is true. I dare not to do that again’ (Ms Y)

For some parents, particularly those with good sense of responsibility, they are usually able to rectify their problems in childcare with accumulated parenting experiences and knowledge like Mrs. I who learned that she should keep water bucket always out of her baby’s reach as it once fell into the water bucket placed in the middle of the dinning room when she was sweeping the floor. However, in some cases, the provision of flexible and appropriate childcare services is need.

5.3.2.2 Summary of Parental Views

Irrespective of the type of neglect, assistance from the informal system is welcome by the majority of parents provided that the assistance is available, handy, friendly and helpful. Beyond this, the views of parents on intervention in child neglect cases are more varied. Some parents tend to have very structured views on the intervention; while some would judge the intervention should be on a cases by case basis of their perceived type to which a parent belongs. In spite of the diversity of views, certain forms of child neglect (like the neglect of survival needs of children) are commonly perceived as less bearable and should be tackled seriously through formal interventions.

5.3.3 *Social Workers’ Views on Child Neglect and its Intervention*

Besides the views of parent informants, this study also collects information on the views of social workers on child neglect and its intervention. Basically, the views of social workers are not homogenous. In this section, findings on the views of social workers and the differences in these views will be presented. However, due to the small sample size, systematic differences in these views cannot be studied. On the other hand, it is more not appropriate to focus on the range of views that are expressed by the social work informants.

5.3.3.1 What is Child Neglect?

All social workers interviewed in this study reported to have experience in working with families with problems in child neglect. Generally speaking, they are very child-centred, and are able to see that children have a range of needs that must be met by their parents or care-givers, including the emotional needs that are necessary for developing a healthy character of the children. Social workers are aware of the definition of child neglect as omission of care actions required of the parents and care-givers, and their professional roles in families with problems of child neglect. However, not all of them are able to see the different types of child neglect in equal terms.

The majority of social workers are conscientiously more concerned with problems of physical child neglect than with other types of child neglect. When illustrating what child neglect is, they commonly brought up scenarios where children who do not have enough to eat and wear, or young children without proper parental supervision. Social workers are notably more concerned with the problem of children being left unattended at home, particularly for those who work in districts with large concentration of immigrant mothers like Tin Shui Wai and Kwun Tong. Since serious or even fatal accidents can happen to the unattended children, especially for those who are young or who lacks ability to take care of themselves, they have a firm conviction that leaving children unattended, even for once, is child neglect.

As is often the case, knowing child neglect in theory does not necessarily mean knowing it in practice. Take education neglect as an example. They know that depriving children of education without acceptable reasons is education neglect. However, when coming across cases where children are regularly absent from schools and parents are neither aware of nor able to provide good reasons for their children's absence, some social workers habitually treat these cases as school non-attendance rather than as cases of education neglect. A school social worker asked herself in the midst of the research interview, "why did I fail to see that these cases of education neglect?"

5.3.3.2 Child Neglect Cases

The fact that social workers have good knowledge and awareness of child neglect does not necessarily mirror a correspondent readiness to treat child neglect as such. They know that not providing food to children by parents with mental disorder, misuse of

children's portion of CSSA for gambling by irresponsible parents, leaving young children unattended at home by working parents, and ignoring the emotional care of the children by divorce parents are child neglect. However, in actual practice, they do not necessarily consider parents with these neglectful behaviors as child neglect cases.

In fact, this study found a strong resistance of the social workers to classify neglectful parents and families as child neglect cases. They would typically consider that these are families with 'elements of child neglect behaviors'. These families are often seen in terms of parenting and child care problems. At most, they are treated as families at risk of child neglect. Strangely, the problem of child neglect is still in the foreground of intervention by the social workers. As a matter of fact, their work focuses a lot on warning the parents of their neglectful behaviors and on preventing them from occurring again.

In the course of interviews with the social worker informants, it was found that the number of cases with the so-called 'elements of child neglect behaviors' in the workload of the social worker is not small. These cases also take up a lot of their time and efforts. Though 'disguised' as cases of other nature, social workers know that their interventions are not effective and so children in these families are still rather risky. Therefore, they are emotionally very stressful in handling these cases, worrying that these cases would 'explode' one day.¹⁰

When asked what child neglect cases are, social worker informants almost unanimously pointed they are cases which have to be dealt with in the multi-disciplinary case conference on child abuse (MDCC) in accordance with the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases (the Guide)*. Even for the very experienced and child-centred social worker informants, they strongly do not favour to deal with neglectful families as child neglect cases and handle them in accordance with the *Guide*. For this reason perhaps, most social workers in this study shared that they have handled only 'a few' child neglect cases in their years as a social worker. By 'a few' cases, they usually mean '3 to 4' families in their past years of service as social workers.

It is interesting to know why cases with 'elements of child neglect' are not dealt with in accordance with the *Guide*. Social workers typically pointed out that it is the quality of

¹⁰ When social workers say a case explodes in the context of child neglect, they mean that serious or fatal accident has occurred to the child(ren) and the case is made public.

evidence that matters. In putting cases to the MDCC, they need to have very solid evidence of neglect. A related but more practical consideration is that, if the evidence does not substantiate the presence of neglect in the MDCC, the relationship between social workers and parents would be destroyed, making further intervention very difficult in the future. Therefore, in the absence of concrete evidence, they think it is more sensible to keep a good working relationship with the parents and use a soft approach to work with them. Though their interventions may not be effective, they could at least keep an eye on the welfare of the children.

As revealed, social workers are commonly caught in an *impasse* in working with the neglectful families. Though they could maintain their relationship with the parents, what they can do to help these parents is very minimal. They did try to help the parents, give them counseling on parenting, and provide them with the needed services. However, all these do not guarantee the effectiveness of their intervention. The risk of child neglect in these cases still haunts their minds. Case monitoring in the forms of keeping an eye on the welfare of the children and warning the parents are often they could do to these cases. Until the presence of significant harm or risk, their approach to intervention in the neglectful families is mostly passive.

5.3.3.3 Views on Intervention in Neglectful Families

The roles of social workers are multiple, entailing working with different systems at the individual, family, group, community and organization levels for different purposes to address the problems at hand. For families with child neglect and those at risk of it, social workers taking part in this study has suggested different level of interventions to combat child neglect.

a. Build and strengthen informal network

Child neglect is often associated with difficulties in parenting and child care. It can be preventable if help is easily and readily available for families with problems of parenting and child care. Like the parent informants, social workers are generally of the view that assistance in parenting and child care from extended family members and neighbors, if available, could prevent a lot of incidents of child neglect. Though their roles and responsibilities are more with intervention in the families by the current division of responsibility, social workers taking part in this study agree that more

professional efforts should be made to build and strengthen the informal systems of help. As a preventive work, the development and strengthening of informal networks is a non-threshold intervention. This should be done because, though not absolutely guaranteeing the absence of child neglect, supportive informal networks are good inoculations against it.

b. Formal system support

According to the social worker informants, problems of parenting, child care, school non-attendance, financial difficulties, and marital problems often precipitate child neglect, if not interweaving with it; and the chronicity of these problems is usually good indicator of the risk of child neglect. It is reasonable to assume that families seeking help from social services agencies for problems like parenting, child care, financial difficulties, and marital problems usually means that the first-line informal system of help fails to work. For this reason, social workers should be sensitive to the possibility of these problems developing into child neglect, and take the presence of these problems as a first threshold for preventing child neglect. If these families are adequately supported with assistance in the formal system, the risk of them developing into a child neglect case is minimized, if not totally removed.

c. Formal System Support and Case Monitoring

As mentioned in Section 5.5.2, social workers often work with families having 'elements of child neglect'. Though these families are not classified as and dealt with in accordance with *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases*, the presence of child neglect in these cases is beyond doubt. Insofar they do not involve significant risk and harm to the children, support from the formal system should continue to be avail to these families so that the risk of child neglect could be minimized. However, the response of parents to the formal support is often not satisfactory. There is little social workers can do, apart from providing parents with some kind of 'authoritative counseling' in the form of warning and case monitoring. The presence of neglect not involving significant risk and harm to the children is a threshold for formal system support and 'authoritative counseling'.

d. Child protection measures

A third threshold is identified in cases with children suffering harm or exposing to significant risk as a result of neglect. When children suffer serious harm or are exposed to significant risk, ‘authoritative counseling’ is proved to be futile. As a result, child protection measures will take precedence over formal support to parents and the families in these cases. Where sufficient evidence has been collected to substantiate the presence of harm or significant risk, the case will be dealt with in accordance with the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases*. Depending on the circumstances of a case, the child may be removed from the family, placed under a care or protection order, and/or placed under the supervision of a social worker in the Social Welfare Department. Where there is sufficient criminal evidence in support of a child neglect offence, parent(s) may be prosecuted in accordance with Section 27 of the Offences Against the Person Ordinance, Chapter 212 of the laws of Hong Kong.

5.3.3.4 Other Views on Intervention

Some repetitive themes were brought up to the attention of researchers during the interviews with the social workers. These mostly involve difficulties in working with parents who neglect their children. If there is not adequate measure to address these difficulties, it is expected that work with the neglectful parents would be unfruitful, if not totally futile. Most of these difficulties involve work with the irresponsible parents and the unmotivated parents

a. Difficulties in working with irresponsible parents

Some neglectful parents are themselves irresponsible parents. Due to their self-centredness, they do not assume responsibility for parenting children. These include parents mentioned in Section 5.3.1.7. They refuse to attend to the needs of their children and do not care about the risk of not attending to these needs. Often, these parents do not respond to counseling, advice, and even warning; or they only pay lip service for improvement. In the absence of strong evidence and clear harm caused to the children, these cases simply drag on. In these cases, social workers are waiting for an episode of neglect which evidence is sufficient enough for social workers to put it to the MDCC for child protection in accordance with the *Guide*. When this happens, harm is already done to the child.

b. Difficulties in working with unmotivated parents

Social workers reported another group of neglectful parents who are not irresponsible. These include those who care more to work than to take care of their children, who are ignorant of children's needs and their roles as parents. Like the irresponsible parents, these parents do not respond to counseling and assistance. However, the reason for their non-response is not so much because they are irresponsible. Rather, it is due to their lack of motivation to receive counseling. Without positive changes in their child care attitude and parenting competence, the risk factors associating with child neglect remain. These families may be fortunate enough to escape serious or fatal accidents to child neglect. However, due to the lack of proper parental supervision, children growing up in these families may run wild in their teen. Risk of child neglect may turn into risk of juvenile delinquency in these families.

c. Collaboration with police

Social workers know that mere social work intervention in neglectful families is neither enough nor effective. In child abuse cases, police intervention often forcefully presents a message to the parents their behaviors have transgressed the law, or are close to transgressing it. The presence of police in child abuse cases is able to bring about compliance, if not cooperation of the parents. As the overwhelming majority of child neglect cases are families with some 'elements of neglect', they are not handled in accordance with the *Guide*. Therefore, under existing practice, there is no room for police involvement in most of the child neglect cases. As mentioned in the previous section, social workers consider that they do not have 'teeth' in their intervention. This fails to bring a strong message to the parents child neglect is a grave concern of the society and it can be a serious offence leading to prosecution. Social workers generally expect more cooperation with the police in families with problems of child neglect.

5.3.3.5 Summary on Social Workers' Views

To sum up, social workers believe that building up and strengthening helpful and supportive informal network is an integral part of the efforts to fight child neglect. When families seek help from the social service for problems like parenting, child care, marital conflicts, and financial difficulties, these are indicators that their informal system of support fails to work and the presence of these problems is an indicator of family support

by the formal system. For child neglect not involving significant risk or serious harm, this is a sign for both formal support and case monitoring. For child neglect involving significant risk or serious harm, child protection in accordance with the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases* is a must.

Intervention in child neglect cases is by no means easy. In the absence of police intervention, social workers pointed out that working with irresponsible and unmotivated parents is particularly difficult in child neglect cases. Unless measures are available to address these problems, no significant breakthrough can be expected in assisting in the majority of neglectful families.

5.3.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter presents results of qualitative interviews with the parent informants and social worker informants in the following areas: child neglect and its causes, parental views on child neglect and its intervention, and social workers' views on child neglect and its intervention. It has been pointed out that child neglect is a multi-faceted problem and it is multi-causal. This implies that there is no remedy to the child neglect problem. Different intervention should target at changing attitude, increasing awareness, increasing knowledge, child care and family support, and making social services more responsive to family needs.

The views of parent informants on child neglect and its intervention are not homogenous. Essentially, two broad types of views can be identified. First are those who views are determined by reference to the severity of neglect. Parents of this view think that intervention by social service is needed for neglect that threatens the survival and safety needs of the children. However, there is a clear tendency not to count in the police, except for most serious cases in which police intervention is absolutely necessary. For the less severe forms of neglect, intervention by informal system is preferred to that of formal system. The second type of view does not make reference to severity of cases. Rather they would judge the intervention needed case by case on the basis of their evaluation of parents on three dual sets, namely, "*intentional vs unintentional neglect*", "*parent- vs child-centeredness*" and "*consistent vs snap-shot neglect*". In spite of the diversity of views, certain forms of child neglect (like the neglect of survival needs of children) are commonly perceived as less bearable and should be tackled seriously through formal interventions.

For the social workers, a lot of neglectful families cannot be dealt with in accordance with the *Guide* because evidence of neglect is hard to be established and because putting a case to MDCC will ruin the working relationship with the parents. They think that it is important to build up and strengthening helpful and supportive informal network as an integral part of the efforts to fight child neglect. When families seek help from social service for problems like parenting, child care, marital conflicts, and financial difficulties, these are signs that their informal system of support fails to work and the presence of these problems is an indicator of family support by the formal system. For child neglect not involving significant risk or serious harm, this is a sign for both formal support and case morning. For child neglect involving significant risk or serious harm, child protection in accordance with the *Procedural Guide for Handling Child Abuse Cases* is a must. Social workers expect more collaboration with the police in working with neglectful families because some of the parents are rather irresponsible and unmotivated.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

It is not easy to intervene in child neglect cases. Responses to neglectful families are based on the available options in a society and how a society would like to solve the problem. For this reasons, this study has surveyed the options of responses to different places and countries to see if foreign experience can be a reference to Hong Kong (Chapter 3). Following this, a telephone survey was conducted to collect the views of 1,046 Hong Kong parents on child neglect and its intervention (Chapter 4). Besides, interviews were carried out with the parent and social worker informants to explore more indepth the views of parents and professionals on the child neglect problem and how they would like the problem to be handled in Hong Kong (Chapter 5). This chapter will pull together the major findings of the desktop survey, the telephone survey and indepth interviews presented in the previous chapters. It is hoped that these findings will throw light on the public and professional views on the child neglect problem and intervention needed for its prevention and remedy. On the basis of the findings from this study, this chapter will present a set of recommendations on the approach to combat child neglect in Hong Kong.

6.2 A Rising Concern for Child Neglect in Hong Kong

As pointed out in the chapter on literature review (Chapter 2), child neglect is easily neglected by a society, not that people are apathetic to the life of children being neglected, but people are easily drawn to the more conspicuous aspects of child maltreatment. This is true for the situation here in Hong Kong. The number of child neglect cases used to be lower when compared with the number of cases like physical and sexual abuse. The number of child neglect cases is gradually rising in recent years. Based on statistics of the Social Welfare Department, the percentage of newly reported child neglect cases among all child abuse cases in Hong Kong has risen from 6% in 2004 to 10.3% in 2009, and it has further risen to 11.3% in the first nine months of the year 2010.¹¹ The rising figures

¹¹ Statistics on Child abuse, Battered spouse and Sexual Violence Cases released by the Social Welfare Department, available at : <http://www.swd.gov.hk/ys/english/stat.html>; (accessed on 1.3.2011)

show that there is increasing public and professional attention to child neglect in Hong Kong.

6.3 Issues with Child Neglect and its Intervention

Intervention in child neglect very much hinges on what constitutes child neglect. Unfortunately, it is never easy to define child neglect. Its definitional confusion is due to the existence of many competing approaches that explain it. More importantly, the understanding of child neglect is socially and culturally relative because the standards with which it is judged is very different across cultures. However, a common definition of child neglect often links itself to parental or caregivers' failure to meet the basic needs of children. Hence, the concept of child neglect is intricately bound up notions of children's needs and parental or caregivers' responsibilities.

Beyond doubt, child neglect can lead to long-term developmental harm to children being neglected. Preventive work on parents and families at risk of child neglect is important. Unfortunately, early assistance to these parents and intervention in these families are usually not possible because parenting is considered to be within the private sphere of the family. When the injurious effects of child neglect are conspicuously observable, it is often too late to intervene because harm is already caused to the children and their families. Therefore, exploring public and professional views on interventions is important for child protection work in child neglect cases.

6.4 Objectives of this Study

This consultancy study is aimed at finding ways for better protection of children from being neglected, and improved service and policy responses to neglectful families in Hong Kong. The specific objectives of it are listed in Chapter 1 and are re-instated below for easy reference of the readers:

1. to study the views of the parents on what constitutes a child neglect case in Hong Kong;
2. to study the views of the child protection professionals on the needs of the neglectful families and the thresholds for intervening in the neglectful families;
3. to explore the experiences and realities of neglectful families in Hong Kong,

with particular reference to the antecedents of the child neglect problem that appeared in the family;

4. to identify in what ways and under what circumstances families can play a role in solving the child neglect problem, both at the prevention and intervention levels;
5. to make recommendations at service and policy levels on the management and prevention of the child neglect problem in Hong Kong.

6.5 Major Findings of this Study

6.5.1 Findings of the Desktop Survey

The definition of child neglect is closely linked to the failure of caregivers to meet a child's basic needs. Beyond this generality, different places/countries would qualify their respective definitions a little bit differently, with the duration of neglectful behaviors, with the intent of the caregivers, with the harm caused or the potential of it, and with the severity and repetitiveness of the lack of the attention to the children's basic needs.

Different measures were adopted in different countries/places. For child neglect that cause grave harm and even fatality to children, all countries/places criminalize it. However, the criminalization of leaving children unattended is rather contentious. Only Taiwan and a few states in the United States criminalize leaving children unattended at home. New South Wales of Australia and most States in the United States criminalize leaving children unattended in the vehicles (Section 3.4.2).

Children suffering or are at risk of neglect also require legal protection. Different countries/places have devised different measures to protect children from neglect. This includes mandatory report (Section 3.4.3.1), statutory care and supervision of children suffering or at risk of neglect (Section 3.4.3.2), legal intervention in parents like good behavior bond, parent responsibility contract, and mandatory parent counseling/education (Section 3.4.3.3), supportive services to families (Section 3.4.3.5), and setting up of infrastructure for safe and healthy development of the children (Section 3.4.3.5).

Child neglect does not often lead to immediately observable injuries on the child; it commonly takes a long time to be noticeable. In reviewing the experiences of other

countries, the thresholds for intervention in child neglect cases are also studied. Common thresholds include the identification of a “child in need”, evidence of “immediate danger” or “risk danger”, and “risk of significant harm”. These thresholds serve to start off the protection of children through different forms of intervention (Section 3.4.3.6). The thresholds and their corresponding protection measures can be useful references for adoption in Hong Kong.

6.5.2 Findings of the Telephone Survey

Child neglect is a rather common part of family life in Hong Kong. Fifteen point eight percent (15.8%) of the respondents and 11.8% of the respondents’ spouses had been neglected by their parents when they were small. Ten point four percent (10.4%) of the respondents considered that they or their spouses have neglected their children, and 3.9% of the respondents regarded that they have neglected to take care of their children (Section 4.2.3).

Parents agreed that certain needs are important for all children in Hong Kong, including the need for food and clothing, the need for respect and recognition, the need for care and concern, the need for protection and the need for education and medical care (Section 4.3.3). Besides, there is a clear consensus that parents have the responsibility to provide for these different areas of need to their children (Section 4.3.4). The findings suggest the existence of public expectations on children’s needs and parental responsibilities in meeting these needs.

There is a marked difference in the awareness of parents between physical and other forms of child neglect, as reflected by their higher average scores in defining vignettes of physical neglect, and relatively lower scores in vignettes of other forms of child neglect, notably those in emotional neglect (Section 4.3.5). These findings suggest that the public may be more sensitive to physically neglect cases, but are more tolerant of other forms of neglect, like emotional neglect. Low awareness and sensitivity to other forms of neglect will hinder spontaneous help by relatives and neighbors, as well as report to official agencies for assistance to the families concerned.

For intervention in child neglectful families, intervention by social workers is the most preferred form of intervention, while that by the police is least preferred. Generally speaking, parents welcome help from neighbors more than from relatives (Section 4.3.6).

On the whole, the parents show a clear preference for support from the informal system (i.e. from relatives and neighbors) in all except education neglect cases. For cases of emotional neglect, the parents welcome help and assistance from neither formal nor informal system. They prefer to leave emotionally neglectful families on their own (Section 4.3.8).

Findings of the telephone survey also show that the background of the parent respondents do not generally affect their views on children's needs and child neglect in Hong Kong, except that younger parents are more hesitant of help by relatives, and educated parents are more resistant of police intervention. The views of parent respondents are relatively homogeneous in matters of children's needs, parental responsibilities, definitional tendency in child neglect, and types of intervention in neglectful families (Section 4.3.7). Though not being an absolute consensus, this relative homogeneity of views suggests that we should do something about child neglect in Hong Kong.

6.5.3 *Findings of the Indepth Interviews*

6.5.3.1 The Views of Parents

Child neglect is a common problem in Hong Kong because a lot of parents admitted to have neglected their children before. Most of the self-reported neglectful behaviors are of very minor nature. The majority of parents could learn from their mistakes and become more careful in taking care of their children. However, child neglect could be a more lasting feature for some families, which is in need of external help (Section 5.3.1).

Interviews with neglectful parents (supplemented by interviews with social workers) shows that the problem is manifest in failure of parents to provide basic necessities to their children, to supervise and look after them, as well as to care about them. Child neglect can be due to a number of reasons, including parenting knowledge and awareness of the problem (Section 5.3.1.1), knowledge of children's needs and parenting competence (Section 5.3.1.2), divorced families and single parents (Section 5.3.1.3), financial hardships and long working hours of the parents (Section 5.3.1.4), unresponsive social policies and services (Section 5.3.1.5), cultural backgrounds of the parents (Section 5.3.1.6), and irresponsibility in parenting (Section 5.3.1.7). Being a complex problem,

child neglect has no simple solution. It requires collaborative efforts of different professionals and a variety of intervention for its prevention and remedy.

Findings of interview with parents echo those in the telephone survey in that assistance from the informal system is generally more welcomed. However, intervention by formal system is not unnecessary. Parents who have clear priority of children's needs and different types of child neglect consider intervention by the formal system is needed when the survival and safety of children are threatened; for these cases, they preferred social work to police interventions (Section 5.3.2.1 a). On the other hand, parents without clear priority of children's needs and child neglect tend to judge the intervention cases by case on the basis of whether the parent is self-centred or child-centred, whether the neglect is intentional or unintentional, and whether it is repeated or single incident (Section 5.3.2.1 b).

6.5.3.2 The Views of Social Workers

Social workers in this study are very child-centred. All of them agreed that children have a range of needs that must be met by their parents or caregivers, including their emotional needs. However, they are conscientiously more concerned about the cases of physical child neglect, particularly cases of leaving children unattended at home. They are also relatively less sensitive to cases of education neglect (Section 5.3.3.1)

Social workers tend to differentiate neglectful families into cases with "elements of child neglect" from "child neglect cases". The former refers to families which are receiving assistance in connection with problems associating with child neglect, like parenting, child care, marital problem, and financial hardships. The families in these cases also manifest signs of child neglect, but there is no strong evidence against them. The latter refers to child protection cases which must be dealt with in accordance with *Guide* (Section 5.3.3.2).

Social workers believe that building up and strengthening helpful and supportive informal network should be the first line of child neglect prevention (Section 5.3.3.3 a). Families seeking help from social service agencies for problems associating with child neglect should be taken as an indicator that their informal system has failed to work. In this sense, family support by formal system with a view to preventing child neglect is

necessary (Section 5.3.3.3 b). Child neglect cases not involving significant risk or serious harm should be closely monitored alongside social service support (Section 5.3.3.3 c). For cases of significant risk and serious harm, child protection in accordance with the *Guide* is a must (Section 5.3.3.3 d).

Social workers generally considered it difficult to intervene in the neglectful families, especially in cases with “elements of child neglect”. First, it is not easy to have enough evidence to put a case to the MDCC for child protection. Second, putting a case to MDCC would ruin the relationship with the parents (Section 5.3.3.2). Besides, some parents are irresponsible (Section 5.3.4.1) and some unmotivated (Section 5.3.4.2). They do not respond to intervention of social workers because they do not see the possible legal consequences of their neglectful behaviors. Social workers hope that they be given “teeth” in changing these parents and they expect more collaboration with the police (Section 5.3.4.3).

6.6 Limitations of this Study

The limitations of this study should be discussed before proceeding to the recommendations. Despite attempts to achieve a representative sample in the telephone survey, the findings represent more the views of parents who are female, below 35 years of age, and in better-paid jobs. This is due to selection bias because parents who took part in the telephone are more likely to be those who are interested in the topic of this study. Though this is a somewhat skewed sample, the research team considers that the findings are important for the understanding of public views on children’s needs, child neglect, and child neglect intervention in Hong Kong because participating parents are believed to be more vocal and concerned with the plight of children in Hong Kong. For future research, more efforts can be made to explore the views of parents who are under-represented in the current study.

Another limitation is due not so much to the design of this study. Rather, it has to do with the choice of the current topic. Child neglect involves parents and children, parents who neglect and children who are neglected. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children have the right to express their views on matters affecting them. On an issue that is so closely connected with children, it is important

to listen to their views as well. Unfortunately, the choice of topic in this study precludes the participation of children. Therefore, future research may also focus on listening to the voices of children on child neglect.

6.7 Recommendations

On the basis of findings of this study, the consultants would like to make the following recommendations for the considerations of the Central Policy Unit and the Family Council of the Hong Kong SAR Government :

6.7.1 *Pertaining to Responses to the Child Neglect Problem*

There is a general expectation, if not an absolute consensus, that need for food and clothing, the need for respect and recognition, the need for care and concern, the need for protection and the need for education and medical care are common for all children in Hong Kong (Section 4.3.3), and the parents have the responsibility to provide for these different areas of need to their children (Section 4.3.4). In this light, it is recommended that:

- a. The needs of children in areas of food and clothing, respect and recognition, care and concern, protection, education, and proper medical care, are to be adequately met in line with the general expectations of the Hong Kong community.
- b. The families should be respected as an important site in meeting children's needs, and parents be responsible for fulfilling their children's needs and seeing to it that the various needs of their children are being adequately fulfilled.
- c. The government has the responsibility to see to it that the needs of children in these areas are adequately met, and to assist parents and families with difficulties to look after these needs of the children.

The study also finds that child neglect is a common part of family life in Hong Kong (Section 4.3.1). Parents are most sensitive to physical forms of child neglect, but are more tolerant of the other forms of neglect, especially emotional neglect (Section 4.3.5). Tolerance of child neglect is in itself a problem. This may be the reason for the

prevalence of child neglect. Qualitative interviews with parents confirmed this point. A lot of parents admitted to have neglected their children in the past; however, most of them are able to learn from their own experience and improve their parenting competence (Section 5.3.1.2). In the light of these findings, it is recommended that :

- d. Public and family education be widely used as an instrument to promote positive and responsible parenting as a strategy for preventing child neglect in the general population.
- e. Public and family education programs should target at raising public awareness of the non-physical forms of child neglect so that the community knows all forms of child neglect are equally injurious to children.

Child neglect is a multi-faceted and multi-causal problem (Sections 5.3.1.1 to 5.3.1.7). There is a debate on whether neglected children should be conceptualized as children in need rather than in child protection terms, and whether this might offer a more constructive support to the children and their families (Stone, 1998). However, it is clear that child neglect is complex problem having no simple solution. It requires collaborative efforts of different parties, including assistance from the formal and informal system for its prevention and remedy. For this reason, it is recommended that:

- f. Assisting the neglectful families be made a multi-party endeavor, including the collaborative efforts of the relatives, friends, neighbors, social workers, and police officers.
- g. For children in need, the collaborative efforts of relatives, friends, neighbors, social workers, and police officers be focused on meeting the needs of children to child neglect.

Where neglectful families are in need of external help, public expectation is that it is more appropriate for them to seek help from the informal system (Section 4.3.8). As far as public intervention in neglectful families is concerned, help by social workers is the most preferred form of intervention, while intervention of the police is least preferred (Section 4.3.6). These results are supported by the interviews with parent informants (Sections 5.3.2.1 a and b). These findings suggest that if social workers do not meet public expectation of them in neglectful families, there can be serious public outcry.

Same is for unwelcome police intervention in neglectful families. Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- h. The mutual help functions of the informal support networks be developed, strengthened, and publicized in the community as a strategy to combat child neglect at the prevention level.
- i. The parent and family support functions of social services be strengthened to help families with problems of parenting, child care, marital conflicts, financial hardships to prevent them from developing into child neglect.
- j. The parent and family support functions of social services be constantly evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing problems of parenting, childcare, marital conflicts, financial hardships from developing into child neglect.
- k. The role of police intervention in child neglect cases be reviewed; in the meantime, the intervention of police in neglectful families be judiciously exercised, if not being a last resort in neglectful families.

6.7.2 *Pertaining to Families at Risk of Child Neglect*

This study finds that families receiving help from the social services for problems like parenting, child care, marital problem, financial hardships can be at risk of child neglect (Section 5.3.3.3 b). Parents from some of these families may or may not have exhibit problems of child neglect. Neglectful behaviors of the parents may or may not have caused conspicuous or serious harm to the children and they may be at different levels of risk. Hence, efforts should be made to prevent families in different kinds of difficulties and problems from developing into neglectful families (Sections 5.3.3.3 c and d). For purpose of early intervention, knowing when and what to intervene is important. Since the public has an expectation that social workers should have a prime role in helping the families at risk of child neglect, it is recommended that:

- l. Early identification of parent with difficulties and strengthening parenting competence at different stages of the family life cycle through parent/ family education.
- m. Problems in parenting, child care, marital problem, financial hardships should be taken as the threshold for intervention; families with these problem should be

given appropriate assistance and family support and counseling to stop the problems from developing to child neglect.

- n. The presence of snap-shot non-injurious child neglect in families be taken as a second threshold; for these families, besides social service support, the families should be closely monitored to see if child protection in accordance with the *Guide* is needed.
- o. Whether injurious or non-injurious, the presence of consistent child neglect be taken as a third threshold; for these families, child protection procedures in accordance with the *Guide* should be followed.

6.7.3 *Pertaining to Unresponsive but Non-offending Parents*

The difficulties of social workers in helping neglectful families and those at risk of child neglect are often due to the lack of cooperation from the parents who are either irresponsible or unmotivated in seeking help (Sections 5.4.3.1 and 5.4.3.2). Reasons for these difficulties are complex but one of them is the lack of sufficiently recognizable power and authority to provide help to these parents. Therefore, it is recommended that

- p. Section 34(1)(c) of the Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance, Chapter 213 of the Laws of Hong Kong be more widely used by juvenile courts to deal with the irresponsible parents.
- q. The Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance be amended to include provisions of ‘parent responsibilities contracts’ like that of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 of New South Wales, Australia.
- r. The Protection of Children and Juvenile Ordinance be amended to empower the court to order neglectful parents to receive mandatory parent education.

6.7.4 *Pertaining to Mandatory Parent Education for Offending Parents*

For parents whose neglectful behaviors have amounted to an offence, the involvement of police is often necessary. However, for offences which have not led to fatality or serious injuries to the children, the public may have a rather strong hesitation to see prosecuting these parents. Meanwhile, these parents often do not respond to mere

social work intervention. For these cases, social workers expect a greater involvement of police. In consideration of these findings, it is recommended that:

- s. Where appropriate, parents be diverted from prosecution to join the police discretionary caution scheme and attend compulsory parent education;. in this regard, the mandate and charter of the police discretionary caution scheme be revised to make this recommendation possible.
- t. Suitable offending parents be subjected to magistrate bind-over and be required to attend parent education programs; in this connection, Section 62 of the of the Magistrate Ordinance be revised for the purpose of empowering magistrates to make an order for parent education.
- u. Convicted parents be subjected to a bind-over sentence and be required to attend parent education programs; in this connection, Section 36 of the of the Magistrate Ordinance and Section 107 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (and other related ordinances) be revised to empower the courts to make an order for parent education.
- v. Existing probation services be more widely used in cases where parents are convicted of child neglect; convicted parents be required to attend parent education program through insertion of a special requirement in the probation order made under Chapter 298 of the Law of Hong Kong.

6.7.5 *Other Recommendations*

Combating child neglect is a collaborative endeavour. Therefore, the above recommendations, especially those in relation to parent education cannot be possible without the participation of different sectors of the community to combat child neglect. With this understanding, it is therefore recommended that

- w. The NGOs and the markets should play a more active role in developing different varieties of parent education programs and provide them to the parents as a form of court-ordered treatment.
- x. Closer collaboration among the government departments (including the SWD and police), the NGOs, and the Judiciary be fostered in implementing court-ordered parent education in HK.

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香港理工大學
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《從家長角度看疏忽照顧幼童》意見調查

8. 2010

(第四版)

電話訪問問卷

程序 A：自我介紹

「喂，你好，我哋係香港理工大學社會政策研究中心打嚟嘅，我地依家進行緊一項有關香港家長對於疏忽照顧兒童嘅意見調查。呢個訪問大約需要十分鐘時間，閣下所提供嘅意見，我哋係會絕對保密嘅，請您放心。**(我哋訪問嘅對象係有 1 個或以上未滿 16 歲子女嘅家長，請問你先生／小姐你係唔係有未滿 16 歲子女嘅家長呢？甘個小朋友係咪同你一齊住呢？／府上有冇有未滿 16 歲子女嘅家長呢？甘個小朋友係咪同你一齊住呢？)**（如受訪者合資格）先生／小姐介唔介意幫我哋完成呢份問卷呢？」

- 住戶反應： 1. ☐ 答應合作-----> [開始程序 B]
- (記錄) 2. ☐ 接通即拒絕/拒絕合作/中途拒絕-----> [結束]
3. ☐ 電話有問題(長鳴、怪聲不能分辨)-----> [結束]
4. ☐ 非目標樣本(沒有受訪對象、FAX、非住宅)-----> [結束]
5. ☐ 無人接聽/電話留言機/暫時唔得閒/線路正在使用---> [須重試]

程序 B：問卷開始

如果最終受訪者不是接聽電話人士，請向最終受訪者讀出：「喂，先生／小姐你好，我哋係香港理工大學社會政策研究中心打嚟嘅，而家想花你十分鐘時間，同你做一項有關香港家長對於疏忽照顧兒童嘅意見調查。閣下所提供嘅意見，我哋係會絕對保密嘅，請您放心。」

[v1] [由訪問員自行填寫]

受訪者性別：1. 男 2. 女

(以下稱受訪者為“先生”或“小姐”)。

甲部：有關照顧兒童基本需要方面

你同唔同意以下讀出有關照顧兒童基本需要方面嘅描述呢？答案可以係「絕對同意」、「同意」、「唔同意」及「絕對唔同意」。

（如懷疑受訪者忘記答案選項，請訪問員在發問時再講解。）

- [v2] 孩子有包括足夠衣和食等基本需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v3] 父母有供給孩子衣食需要的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v4] 孩子有被尊重和被肯定的需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v5] 父母有尊重和肯定孩子的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v6] 孩子有被照顧和關懷的需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v7] 父母有照顧和關懷孩子的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v8] 孩子有被保護的需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v9] 父母有保護孩子的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v10] 孩子有接受適切教育的需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v11] 父母有確保孩子接受適切教育的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v12] 孩子在生病時有接受醫治的需要。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v13] 父母在孩子生病時有確保孩子接受醫治的責任。
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

乙部：有關疏忽照顧兒童方面

以下會讀出一啲有關**照顧兒童**嘅描述，請根據你嘅認知，選擇答案。

[v14] **你同唔同意「父母出外購物，將8歲大嘅孩子獨留喺屋企數小時」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？**係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v15] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v16] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v17] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v18] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

[v19] 你同唔同意「三歲幼童嘅父母冇將藥物放好，只將佢放喺幼童可以接觸到嘅地方」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v20] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v21] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v22] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v23] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v24] 你同唔同意「父母冇定時俾三歲嘅幼童進食，令到幼童嘅身高同埋體重半年內已經冇增加」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v25] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v26] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v27] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v28] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v29] 你同唔同意「父母認為需要鍛煉孩子嘅體魄同埋抵抗力，喺寒冷嘅天氣入面都有俾孩子著禦寒衣服」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v30] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v31] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v32] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v33] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v34] 你同唔同意「父母經常隨意將剪刀同埋利器放喺孩子可以接觸到嘅地方」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v35] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v36] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v37] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v38] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v39] 你同唔同意「父母嘅有合理解釋嘅情況下，俾孩子缺課25天」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v40] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v41] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v42] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v43] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v44] 你同唔同意「父母不滿意孩子就讀學校老師嘅教學方法，三個月前索性為孩子退學將佢留喺屋企」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v45] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v46] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v47] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v48] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v49] 你同唔同意「十三歲嘅孩子無心向學，已經有兩個月冇返學，學校屢次要求同家長會面，家長冇回應，繼續容讓孩子賦閒在家」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v50] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v51] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v52] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v53] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v54] 你同唔同意「七歲輕度智障嘅孩子喺一所普通學校就讀，未能從學校嘅課程獲益，父母拒絕學校將孩子轉到一所輕度智障小學嘅要求」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v55] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v56] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v57] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v58] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v59] 你同唔同意「父母對就讀小學嘅孩子所獲得嘅良好成績，毫不在意」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v60] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v61] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v62] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v63] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v64] 你同唔同意「父母一直不容許12歲嘅孩子參加各類學校活動，認為呢啲活動妨礙咗佢哋為子女安排嘅計劃」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v65] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v66] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v67] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v68] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v69] 你同唔同意「就讀初中嘅孩子經常喺父母面前吸煙同埋飲啤酒，父母視而不見，不加干涉」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v70] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v71] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v72] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v73] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v74] 你同唔同意「8歲嘅孩子喺班中考試擺到第五名，父母不滿佢未能擺到更加好嘅成績，已經連續三個星期對佢不瞅不睬，孩子喺屋企不知如何是好」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v75] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v76] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v77] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v78] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v79] 你同唔同意「六歲幼童連續一個星期咳嗽同埋流鼻水，父母認為呢啲係輕微疾病，有帶佢去睇醫生接受診斷同埋治療」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v80] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v81] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v82] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v83] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v84] 你同唔同意「十歲嘅孩子腦部生瘤，必須動手術將瘤割除，否則就有生命危險。由於醫生唔能夠做出手術有風險嘅保證，父母堅決唔俾孩子進行手術」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v85] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v86] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v87] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v88] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v89] 你同唔同意「孩子有長期病患，必須定期去醫院進行驗血同埋覆診，父母因為工作關係，經常未能帶孩子去醫院按時覆診」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v90] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v91] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v92] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

- [v93] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
 1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v94] 你同唔同意「十四歲嘅孩子出現思覺失調嘅症狀，父母相信係邪靈所致，過去兩個月一直拒絕帶佢去睇醫生，只係經常去寺廟為孩子祈福」係疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對同意、同意、唔同意定係絕對唔同意呢？
 1. 絕對同意 2. 同意 3. 唔同意 4. 絕對唔同意 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v95] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要社工嘅介入呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
 1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v96] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為父母需唔需要被檢控疏忽照顧兒童呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
 1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v97] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要親戚嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
 1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚
- [v98] 如果一個家庭出現上述情況，你認為呢個家庭需唔需要鄰舍嘅協助呢？係絕對需要、需要、唔需要定係絕對唔需要呢？
 1. 絕對需要 2. 需要 3. 唔需要 4. 絕對唔需要 5. 不知道／不清楚

丙部：個人背景資料

- [v99] 請問你嘅年齡係...？（以上一次生日計算）
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. 25歲或以下 | 6. 46-50歲 |
| 2. 26-30歲 | 7. 51-55歲 |
| 3. 31-35歲 | 8. 56-60歲 |
| 4. 36-40歲 | 9. 60歲以上 |
| 5. 41-45歲 | 10. 拒絕回答 |

[v100] 請問你嘅教育程度係...？（以受訪者最高學歷計算）

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. 未受教育／幼稚園 | 5. 預科（中六至中七） |
| 2. 小學 | 6. 專上（非學位課程） |
| 3. 中學（中一至中三） | 7. 大學學位或以上 |
| 4. 中學（中四至中五） | 8. 拒絕回答 |

[v101] 請問你依家有冇工作呢？

1. 有 （跳往 v103）
2. 冇
3. 拒絕回答 （跳往 v105）

[v102] 咁你係退咗休丫，學生丫，定係有其他身份？

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. 學生 | （跳往 v105） |
| 2. 家務料理者 | （跳往 v105） |
| 3. 退休人士 | （跳往 v105） |
| 4. 待業人士 | （跳往 v105） |
| 5. 其他，請註明：_____ | （跳往 v105） |
| 6. 拒絕回答 | （跳往 v105） |

[v103] 請問你嘅職位係...？（毋須讀出選項）

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. 經理及行政級人員 | 7. 工藝及有關人員 |
| 2. 專業人員 | 8. 機台及機器操作員及裝配員 |
| 3. 輔助專業人員 | 9. 非技術工人 |
| 4. 文員 | 10. 其他，請註明：_____ |
| 5. 服務工作及商店銷售人員 | 11. 唔知道／唔清楚 |
| 6. 漁農業熟練工人 | 12. 拒絕回答 |

[v104] 請問你嘅個人每月收入大約係...？

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. \$4,999 或以下 | 8. \$30,000–39,999 |
| 2. \$5,000–7,999 | 9. \$40,000–49,999 |
| 3. \$8,000–9,999 | 10. \$50,000 或以上 |
| 4. \$10,000–14,999 | 11. 冇收入 |
| 5. \$15,000–19,999 | 12. 唔知道／唔清楚 |
| 6. \$20,000–24,999 | 13. 拒絕回答 |
| 7. \$25,000–29,999 | |

[v105] 請問你嘅每月家庭總收入大約係...？

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. \$4,999 或以下 | 9. \$40,000–49,999 |
| 2. \$5,000–7,999 | 10. \$50,000 或以上 |
| 3. \$8,000–9,999 | 11. \$60,000–69,999 |
| 4. \$10,000–14,999 | 12. \$70,000–79,999 |
| 5. \$15,000–19,999 | 13. \$80,000 或以上 |
| 6. \$20,000–24,999 | 14. 冇收入 |
| 7. \$25,000–29,999 | 15. 唔知道／唔清楚 |
| 8. \$30,000–39,999 | 16. 拒絕回答 |

[v106] 請問你住喺邊一區？

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1. 中西區 | 11. 荃灣 |
| 2. 灣仔 | 12. 葵青 |
| 3. 港島東區 | 13. 沙田 |
| 4. 港島南區 | 14. 大埔 |
| 5. 油尖旺 | 15. 新界北區 |
| 6. 深水埗 | 16. 元朗 |
| 7. 九龍城 | 17. 屯門 |
| 8. 黃大仙 | 18. 離島 |
| 9. 觀塘 | 19. 拒絕回答 |
| 10. 西貢 | |

[v107] 請問你嘅婚姻狀況係...？

1. 未婚
2. 同居
3. 已婚
4. 再婚
5. 分居／離婚
6. 喪偶
7. 拒絕回答

[v108] 請問你現時同住嘅家庭成員有幾多個呢？(包括埋你自己)

1. 兩個
2. 三個
3. 四個
4. 五個
5. 六個或以上

[v109] 請問你有幾多個未滿 16 歲嘅子女呢？

1. 一個
2. 兩個 (跳往 v111)
3. 三個 (跳往 v111)
4. 四個或以上 (跳往 v111)

[v110] (受訪者只有一名子女) 請問你嘅子女係幾多歲呢？

-----歲 (跳往 v113)

[v111] (受訪者有多於一名子女) 請問當中最大係幾多歲？

-----歲

[v112] (受訪者有多於一名子女) 請問當中最細係幾多歲？

-----歲

[v113] 請問你同住嘅家庭成員之中(包括你自己)有冇係最近 7 來內來港嘅新移民人士呢？

1. 有
2. 冇

[v114] 請問你嘅家庭現時有冇接受綜援？

1. 有
2. 冇

[v115] 請問你嘅家庭以前有冇接受過綜援？

1. 有
2. 冇

[v116] 你自己嘅細個嗰時有冇俾父母疏忽照顧過？

1. 有
2. 冇

[v117] 你嘅配偶嘅細個嗰時有冇俾父母疏忽照顧過？

1. 有
2. 冇
3. 唔知道

[v118] 你認為你自己或者你嘅配偶過去有冇試過疏忽照顧兒童？

1. 有
2. 冇
3. 唔知道

[v119] 你或者你嘅配偶有冇曾經俾人話你哋疏忽照顧兒童？

1. 有
2. 冇
3. 唔知道

～問卷完成 多謝先生／小姐參與回答問卷～

Full Output of CFA on the NEGLECT Scale by AMOS					
Computation of degrees of freedom					
Number of distinct sample moments : 153					
Number of distinct parameters to be estimated : 38					
Degree of Freedom (153-38) : 115					
Results					
Minimum was achieved					
Chi-square = 310.881					
Degree of freedom : 115					
Probability level : .000					
Model Fit Summary					
<i>CMIN</i>					
Model	NPART	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Hypothesized Model	38	310.881	115	.000	2.703
Saturated Model	153	.000	0		
Independence Model	17	3746.640	136	.000	27.549
<i>RMR, GFI</i>					
Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI	
Hypothesized Model	.040	.962	.950	.723	
Saturated Model	.000	1.000			
Independence Model	.268	.489	.425	.435	
<i>Baseline Comparisons</i>					
Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Hypothesized Model	.917	.902	.946	.936	.946
Saturated Model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence Model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
<i>Parsimony-Adjusted Measures</i>					
Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI		
Hypothesized Model	.846	.775	.800		
Saturated Model	.000	.000	.000		
Independence Model	1.000	.000	.000		

<i>NCP</i>					
Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90		
Hypothesized Model	195.881	147.300	252.125		
Saturated Model	.000	.000	.000		
Independence Model	3610.640	3414.679	3813.887		
<i>FMIN</i>					
Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90	
Hypothesized Model	.297	.187	.141	.241	
Saturated Model	.000	.000	.000	.000	
Independence Model	3.585	3.455	3.268	3.650	
<i>RMSEA</i>					
Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE	
Hypothesized Model	.040	.035	.046	.998	
Independence Model	.159	.155	.164	.000	
<i>AIC</i>					
Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC	
Hypothesized Model	386.881	388.213	575.085	613.085	
Saturated Model	306.000	311.363	1063.767	1216.767	
Independence Model	3780.640	3781.236	3864.836	3881.836	
<i>ECIV</i>					
Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI	
Hypothesized Model	.370	.324	.424	.371	
Saturated Model	.293	.293	.293	.298	
Independence Model	3.618	3.430	3.812	3.618	
HOELTER					
Model	HOELTER	HOELTER			
Hypothesized Model	475	515			
Independence Model	46	50			

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of Applied Social Sciences
Centre for Social Policy Studies

Study on Parental Perspectives of Child Neglect

Interview guide with Parents

Introducing the interviewer, provision of information on the study, and clarification of the rights of the informants, and signing of the consent form (About 5 minutes)

Section A : Experience of Neglectful Parents [For Neglectful Parents Only]

Contact with the centre (5 minutes)

1. How long have you been receiving service in this centre ?
2. Would you please share with us what was the incident that directly leads you and your family to receive services in this centre ?

Exploration of the incident (15 minutes)

3. What was that incident ?
4. Did you and your family think that it was problem at that time ?
5. How did it happen ?
6. What do you think are the factors that contribute to it ?
7. Did you and your family try to resolve it ? If so, what have you done ?

Experience with the Service (15 minutes)

8. Who brought you and your family to the attention of this social service centre ?
9. How did you and your family feel when you were first known to this centre.
10. How do you describe your experience and responses when you and your family were first in touch with the social worker(s) of the centre ?
11. What services did you and your family receive ? Are they what you need/want ?
12. Are the situation/problems any better since you and your family have received services in this centre ? If yes, in what ways did you and your family contribute to the improvement of the situation ? If not, what do you think you and your family can do to improve it, in addition to the efforts of the social worker here ?

Section B : Parental Views on Children's Need and Child Neglect [For all parents]

Needs of the children and responsibility of the parents (20 minutes)

1. What do you think are the basic needs of your child(ren) ? [List what informant said, i.e. food and clothing, supervision and guidance, emotional care, recognition and respect, protection, education, medical treatment, etc.]
2. Do you think parents have the responsibility to provide for these needs of their children ? Why and why not ?
3. If parents do not have a responsibility to provide for the needs mentioned by the informants, who do they think have the responsibility ?
4. For needs which are not mentioned by the informants, ask if they think these are needed by their children ?

Views on Child Neglect (20 minutes)

5. What in your views is child neglect ?
6. If parents fail to provide food and clothing to their children, is this child neglect ? Why and why not ?
7. If parents do not supervise their child properly, is this child neglect ? Why and why not ? What if their lack of supervision will likely expose their child to physical and moral danger ?
8. If parents does not respond to their child's need for emotional care, is this child neglect ? Why and why not ?
9. If parents are not interested in what the child does and in his achievements, is this child neglect ? Why and why not ?
10. If a child is sick for some time and his parents do not bring him for medical treatment, is this child neglect ? Why and why not ?

Views on Threshold of Professional Intervention (10 minutes)

11. What do you think are the indicators that a child neglect case is absolutely in need of immediate professional attention? Please give examples.

- End of Interview. Thank you! -

List of Informants in Indepth Interview

List of Neglectful Parents Interviewed

Name	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Household Income	Family Size	Number of Children (below 16)	New Arrival	CSSA	Neglected in Childhood
Ms L	41-45	F.6- F.7	Home Carer	Married	15,000 – 19,999	5	2 (15 and 12)	N	N	N
Mrs. I	46-50	F.4- F.5	Home Carer	Married	25,000-29,999	5	3 (22, 19 and 14)	N	N	Y
Mrs. L	40-50	F.4- F.5	Associate professional	Married	20,000 – 24,999	3	1 (12)	N	N	Y
Mrs. M	51-55	F.1- F.3	Associate professional	Married	15,000 – 19,999	3	1 (15)	N	N	Y
Ms A	31-35	Nil	Home Carer	Divorced	4,000-5,000	3	2 (1, 11)	Y	Y	N
Mr. W	46-50	F.1- F.3	Property Security	Married	15,000 – 19,999	4	2 (11, 14)	N	N	Y
Mrs. T	31-35	F.1- F.3	Hair Styling	Divorced	3,000-4,000	2	1 (10)	N	Y	N
Ms Y	31-35	F.1- F.3	Catering	Divorced	3,000-4,000	2	1 (11)	Y	Y	N
Mr. H	56-60	Nil	Carpenter	Divorcing	Irregular	4	2 (8 and 10)	N	N	N
Ms Z	31-35	F.4- F.5	Shopkeeper	Married	15,000 – 19,999	6	3 (2,4 and 9)	Y	N	Y

List of Non-Neglectful Parents Interviewed

Name	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Household Income	Family Size	No. of Children (below 16)	New Arrival	CSSA	Neglected in Childhood
Miss B	36-40	F.6-F.7	Managers / Administrators	Married	40,000-49,999	4	2	N	N	N
Miss C	41-45	F.4-F.5	Homemaker	Married	60,000-69,999	3	1	N	N	N
Mr. D	41-45	Degree or above	Associate Professionals	Married	50,000-59,999	3	1	N	N	N
Miss E	36-40	F.6-F.7	Homemaker	Married	50,000-59,999	4	2	N	N	N
Miss F	36-40	Degree or above	Professionals (Part time)	Married	30,000-39,999	5	2	N	N	N
Mr. G	41-45	Post secondary	Associate Professionals	Married	60,000-69,999	3	1	N	N	N
Mr. J	46-50	F.6-F.7	Service workers and shop sale workers	Married	30,000-39,999	4	2	N	N	N
Miss K	36-40	F.4-F.5	Homemaker	Married	30,000-39,999	3	1	N	N	Y
Mr. N	31-35	Degree or above	Managers / Administrators	Married	80,000 or above	5	3	N	N	N
Mr. P	46-50	F.4-F.5	Associate Professionals	Married	40,000-49,999	3	1	N	N	N

Miss Q	36-40	Post secondary	Clerk	Married	30,000-39,999	4	1	N	N	N
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List of Non-Neglectful Parents Interviewed (Continued)

Name	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Household Income	Family Size	No. of Children (below 16)	New Arrival	CSSA	Neglected in Childhood
Miss R	41-45	Degree or above	Professionals	Married	80,000 or above	3	1	N	N	N
Miss S	41-45	Post secondary	Associate Professionals	Married	60,000-69,999	4	1	N	N	N
Miss U	31-35	Degree or above	Associate Professionals	Separated	50,000-59,999	4	1	N	N	N
Miss V	41-45	F.6-F.7	Managers / Administrators	Married	80,000 or above	3	1	N	N	Y
Mr. X	41-45	Post secondary	Associate Professionals	Married	50,000-59,999	3	1	N	N	N
Mr .Y	46-50	F.6-F.7	Managers / Administrators	Married	70,000-79,999	5	2	N	N	N

List of Social Workers Interviewed (Continued)

Case	Sex	Age	Year of Service (Existing agency)	Service Setting	Working with neglect cases
1	F	40s	16	Child protection	Yes
2	F	40s	13	Child protection	Yes
3	M	30s	4	IFSC	Yes
4	F	50s	8	IFSC	Yes
5	F	30s	6	IFSC	Yes
6	F	30s	5	IFSC	Yes
7	F	30s	15	IFSC	Yes
8	F	30s	14	IFSC	Yes
9	F	30s	6	IFSC	Yes
10	F	20s	4	IFSC	Yes
11	M	20s	2	IFSC	Yes
12	F	20s	2	School social service	Yes
13	M	40s	4	Family service	Yes