



Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region

CIFA Survey on Challenges Faced by Families in 4 Asian Regions

Background

1. A regional platform, namely the Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) has been established in January 2008. CIFA, the first of its kind in Asia, is formed by organizations and professionals who share the same dream of establishing a regional platform for trans-disciplinary collaboration in promoting family well being. The setting up and development of CIFA will put the Asian Region on equal footing with the progress made in other parts of the world.
2. In June to September 2007, a two-phase survey was conducted by the Provisional Council of CIFA on challenges faced by families in Hong Kong. Objectives of the survey were to provide a baseline on the current situation in Hong Kong and as a basis for similar survey in other countries in the region to facilitate cross country comparison on family challenges. The survey was conducted by Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong, using telephone interview with a randomly selected sample. Phase I was carried out in late June 2007 and “Exploratory open-ended” questions were used to explore the general public concern over family issues. 263 respondents were successfully interviewed. The findings were compiled and used to formulate the questions and items to be covered in Phase II conducted in late August 2007, where 512 respondents were successfully interviewed.
3. Findings from the two surveys indicate that the most common challenges faced by families in Hong Kong are: (1) long working hours/heavy workload; (2) worries over how they could do their best to nurture their children as well as to provide their children with best educational opportunities; and (3) great stress due to illness or anxieties over physical or mental health. Based on the findings of these two surveys, recommendations were made. Council of CIFA is of the view that it would be useful to conduct similar surveys in different cities of the region to facilitate cross-country comparison and to provide a baseline for trends on family challenges in the contemporary era in the Asian region.

Objectives of the present study

4. The objectives of the survey are
 - To identify the challenges faced by families in the different cities in the

- Asian region to facilitate cross-country comparison.
 - To make recommendation on strategies to help families in coping with the challenges in a positive manner.
 - To motivate actions among helping professionals to support families facing challenges.
5. The study was intended to include Kuala Lumpur, Shenzhen, Taiwan and Hong Kong. However, as the methodology and the questionnaire design used in Taiwan is slightly different from the other cities, a summary of the findings of Taiwan is only included in the appendix.

Methodology of study

6. While the methodologies were similar among the three cities, there are some fine differences, particularly in terms of timing and sample size.

Hong Kong

7. A telephone survey was conducted between November 12 to 13, 2008 targeting on Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above.
8. Telephone numbers were selected randomly from residential telephone directories and mixed with additional numbers generated by the computer. If more than one subject had been available, the one who had his/her birthday next was selected.
9. A total of 503 interviews had been successfully completed. Given the effective sample size of 503, the maximum sampling error of any proportion estimates would be less than $\pm 4.37\%$ (calculated at 95% confidence level). The data collected have been weighted according to the figures of the age and gender profile of Hong Kong population as reported in the Population Census in mid 2008.

Kuala Lumpur

10. A telephone survey was conducted between March 23 to May 20, 2009 targeting at families with Malaysian residents aged 18 or above, living in Kuala Lumpur area, speaking Cantonese, English, Bahasa Melayu or Tamil
11. Participants were recruited via a 2-level sampling method. Telephone numbers were randomly selected from the telephone directory. Once telephone contact was successfully established with a target household, one person was selected from all those present using the "next birthday" rule (i.e., selecting the member

whose birthday is next to come counting from the interview date)

12. A total of 529 telephone interviews were successfully completed. Given the sample size of 529, the maximum sampling error of percentage estimates within a 95% confidence interval is $\pm 4.26\%$. No weighting is applied in the following analysis.

Shenzhen

13. A telephone survey was conducted between August 1 to 11, 2009, targeting at Families living in Shenzhen, having Chinese-speaking family members aged 18 or above.
14. Telephone numbers were selected randomly from residential telephone directories and mixed with additional numbers generated by the computer. If more than one subject were available, the one having her/his birthday next was selected.
15. A total of 507 interviews were successfully completed. Given the sample size of 507, the maximum sampling error of percentage estimates within a 95% confidence interval is $\pm 4.35\%$. No weighting is applied in the following analysis.

Taiwan

16. A telephone survey was conducted between May 6 to 8, 2009, targeting at Families living in Kaosiung and Taipei, having family members aged 18 or above.
17. Proportional stratified random sampling was used with respect to the different population size of administrative districts in the two cities..
18. A total of 502 interviews were successfully completed. Given the sample size of 502, the maximum sampling error of percentage estimates within a 95% confidence interval is $\pm 4.4\%$. No weighting is applied in the following analysis.

Results of the surveys

19. Table 1 presents the summary findings of the three cities enabling some form of comparison. We should note that the three cities are not culturally identical. Ways that people define stress can be very different among people in the three cities. Even if the definition of stress is the same, the way that people answer questions in survey interviews can have cultural differences, e.g. the social desirability or stigma related to families facing stress can be very different.

Thus, it is not advisable to compare the percentage figures across cities.

20. We noted that apparently more respondents in Kuala Lumpur tended to report that their families or families of their friends or relatives were facing stress than their counter parts in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. This may be either variations in cultural definition of stress or admitting that people are facing stress, or the families in Kuala Lumpur are actually facing more stress.
21. In Hong Kong, the most common stress faced by families was “too long working hours or too heavy workload”. This is perhaps one of the well known features of the Hong Kong society.
22. In both Shenzhen and Kuala Lumpur, the most common stress faced by families was “worry that children may not be getting the best education opportunities”. We should also note that this stressor was very common among families in Hong Kong.
23. In all the three Asian cities, raising children was apparently the major stressor for families, followed by health.
24. In Hong Kong, among the various stressors, financial stressors were less frequent, while, in Kuala Lumpur and Shenzhen, in-law and couple relationship were the least mentioned stressors.

Table 1: Stresses faced by families in the three cities

Stressor	Hong Kong		Kuala Lumpur		Shenzhen	
	Common/v common	mean	Common/ v common	mean	Common/ v common	mean
In debt?	25.10%	2.51	52.3%	3.38	48.7%	3.39
Tight financial condition	28.60%	2.72	53.3%	3.42	31.2%	3.09
Unemployment / Insufficient work	24.70%	2.54	36.0%	2.97	23.7%	2.86
Too long working hours / Too heavy workload	62.90%	3.62	53.9%	3.4	36.0%	3.17
Worry that child(ren) may not get the best educational opportunities	51.50%	3.29	63.8%	3.73	57.8%	3.53
Difficulties in child discipline	53.80%	3.38	58.9%	3.59	47.1%	3.34
In-law relationship problems	31.10%	2.69	42.6%	3.2	26.5%	2.88
Couple relationship problems	34.20%	2.77	45.0%	3.2	21.5%	2.77
Parent-child relationship problems	24.20%	2.59	42.6%	3.1	17.1%	2.64
Personal illness / Worry over own health problems	50.10%	3.24	58.6%	3.55	31.2%	2.99

Needing to take care of family member(s) who are ill	35.80%	2.84	58.6%	3.24	36.3%	2.99
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(* The above figures should be read with caution. Comparing percentage figures across cities may not be appropriate)

Observations and recommendations

25. Invariably raising children was one of the major stresses for families. There is apparently a need to review the services and support available to families in dealing with issues of education and discipline for their children. Services to support families helping them to develop better understanding of the education system, the various opportunities for their children development, and the strengths of their children will help to release some of these stresses. Parent education would help to enhance parents' effectiveness and self confidence.
26. In Hong Kong, the stress due to long working hour and workload is very prominent. Possible legislation to set up standard working hours coupled with minimum wage would be necessary. The promotion of family-friendly policies and practices in Hong Kong will also help to reduce the stress faced by employees at home.

The results about Malaysian families (ie., more reported stress, greater concerns about children's education, and less report of in-law/couple issues) may require further reflection on the current development of Malaysian society. Future family policies may need to take into consideration of how to help family cope better in various family life cycles. Concerns relating to education may reflect the sociopolitical atmosphere in the country and may warrant greater mobilization of advocacy work for the various ethnic groups in Malaysia. Further research would be helpful to explore the relatively less reported issues of in-law and couple relationship problems.

27. This type of research if conducted regularly in the future will help to update our understanding on the challenges faced by families in the Asia region so that timely intervention can be developed accordingly.

Conclusion

28. This is a first attempt of CIFA to conduct a cross country survey. It has encountered some difficulties to coordinate the project to ensure consistency in methodology, sample and time line for completion of data collection among the participating countries. We are conscious of the limitation encountered in the survey, and thus cautious not to make a direct comparison between these sub-regions.

29. Nevertheless, the findings of the survey have provided a baseline which has enabled us to have a better understanding of the concerns in these sub-regions. It is hoped that these will lead to further and regular actions in data collection, examination of policies and practices so that timely and appropriate intervention can be developed accordingly.

Appendix I
The Questionnaire

Version used in Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Shenzhen: Have your family or your friends/relatives' families encountered the following situations in the past 12 months?

Version used in Taiwan: Have you or your family members living together encountered the following situations in the past 12 months?

The choice of answers used in	HK, SZ and KL	TW
1	Very uncommon	No such problem
2	Uncommon	Mild
3	Half half	So-so
4	Common	Serious
5	Very common	---

A. In the Economical Aspect

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. | In debt | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ii. | Tight financial condition | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

B. Next, in the aspect of Work

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. | Unemployment / Insufficient work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ii. | Too long working hours / Too heavy workload | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

C. Then, Child Nurturing and Discipline Aspect

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. | Worry that child(ren) may not get the best educational opportunities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | 1 2 3 4 5 | | | | | |
| ii. | Difficulties in child discipline | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

D. What about Family Relations Aspect?

- | | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. | In-law relationship problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ii. | Couple relationship problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| iii. | Parent-child relationship problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

E. Then, Health Aspect

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| i. | Personal illness / Worry over own health problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ii. | Needing to take care of family member(s) who are ill | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix II
Profile of respondents in Hong Kong Sample

30. Gender: 58.6% of the respondents were female. This is apparently slightly higher than the percentage of female aged 18 or above in the general population.
31. Age: The age distribution of the sample is quite even across different age groups.

Table II.1: Age profile of respondents

Age groups	% among respondents
18 - 20	4.6%
21 - 29	15.4%
30 - 39	19.3%
40 - 49	22.3%
50 - 59	18.0%
60 or above	20.4%
Total (n ¹ =481)	100%

32. Education Attainment: The percentage of respondents with higher education (27.8% Degree or above) was apparently higher than that of the general population. This phenomenon was quite usual among telephone survey.

Table II.2: Education attainment

Level of Education attainment	%
Primary or lower	17.3%
Secondary	41.8%
Matriculation	7.5%
Post-sec non degree	5.7%
Post-sec degree	25.6%
Post-graduate	2.1%
Total (n=503)	100%

33. Economic activity: Slightly more than half (55.6%) of the respondents were working.

Table II.3: Economic Activity

Economic Activity	%
Management/Professionals	25.4%
Clerical and service workers	21.2%
Manual Labour	9.0%
Students	6.9%
Homemaking	14.4%
Others (not economic active)	23.2%
Total (n= 489)	100%

34. Earned income: The median income of those respondents who had an earned

¹ The "n" is different for different tables because of the variation in non-response.

income was \$16,117. This was apparently much higher than the median earned income in Hong Kong² and this is very much related to the higher portion of respondents with higher education.

Table II.4: Earned income per month

Eared income	%
Less than HK\$5,000	6.7%
HK\$5,000 - 9,999	21.4%
HK\$10,000 - 19,999	35.8%
HK\$20,000 - 29,999	14.8%
HK\$30,000 - 39,999	8.9%
HK\$40,000 - 49,999	6.6%
HK\$50,000 ore more	5.7%
Total (n=257)	100%

35. Region of residence: The distribution of respondents among different regions of Hong Kong is quite similar to that of the general population with a slightly under-representation in Kowloon West and N.T. West while slight over-representation in the other regions..

Table II.5: Region of residence

Region	%
Hong Kong Island	21.1%
Kowloon West	14.2%
Kowloon East	14.3%
New Territories West	24.3%
New Territories East	26.2%
Total (n=494)	100%

36. Household size: The average household size of the respondents was 3.51, i.e. higher than that of the general population (3.0). This is a usual slight bias of telephone survey towards larger households for it would be more likely to complete successfully an interview.

² In the 4th quarter of 2008, the median personal income was \$10,500.

Table II.6: Household size

Size	%
1	4.1%
2	21.6%
3	22.3%
4	32.5%
5	13.9%
6	3.4%
7 +	2.3%
Total (n=487)	100.0

37. Number of generations in the household: The majority (62.1%) of the households had 2 generations. Only 2 households in the sample had 4 generations.

Table II.7: Number of generations in the household

Number of generations	%
1 generation	24.1%
2 generations	62.1%
3 generations	13.3%
4 generations	0.5%
Total (n=493)	100%

38. Overall view of the respondent profile: As in most telephone surveys, the profile of respondents has a slight bias towards more female, relative more mature adults, bigger households, higher education level, and higher income level. To reduce the extent of bias due to gender and age, and as the detailed figures of Hong Kong in these two figures are available, the analyses described below were all weighed figures, weighed with respect to the ratio of percentage of each age x gender group percentage in the Hong Kong population over that in the sample.

Appendix III
Profile of respondents in Kuala Lumpur Sample

39. Gender: 62.6% of the respondents were female. Similarly, this is the usual slightly over representation of female respondents in telephone survey.
40. Age: The age distribution of respondents was quite even across different age groups.

Table III.1: Age profile of respondents

Age groups	% among respondents
18 - 20	10.9%
21 - 29	15.6%
30 - 39	19.6%
40 - 49	25.7%
50 – 59	17.9%
60 or above	10.3%
Total (n ³ =525)	100%

41. Education Attainment: The percentage of respondents with higher education (32.5% Degree or above) was apparently quite high. Again, this phenomenon was quite usual among telephone survey.

Table III.2: Education attainment

Level of Education attainment	%
Primary or lower	5.4%
Secondary	39.4%
Matriculation/Pre-U	9.6%
Tertiary non-degree	13.1%
Tertiary degree	25.6%
Graduate school/post-graduate	6.9%
Total (n=520)	100%

42. Economic activity: About half (49.6%) of the respondents were working.

Table III.3: Economic Activity

Economic Activity	%
Executives and professionals	26.5%
Clerical and service workers	19.1%
Production Workers	4.0%
Students	13.4%
Homemaking	18.6%
Others	18.4%
Total (n= 528)	100%

³ The “n” is different for different tables because of the variation in non-response.

43. Earned income: The median income of those respondents who had an earned income was RM2,612.

Table III.4: Earned income per month

Eared income	%
Below RM1,000	6.7%
RM1,000 – 1,999	21.4%
RM2,000 – 2,999	35.8%
RM3,000 – 4,999	14.8%
RM5,000 – 7,499	8.9%
RM7,500 – 9,999	6.6%
RM10,000 or above	5.7%
Total (n=462)	100%

44. Race: The largest group of respondents is Chinese (55.7%) which appears to be slightly over-represented (as compared to 43% of the population in Kuala Lumpur).

Table III.5: Racial goups

Race	%
Malay	28.0%
Chinese	55.7%
Indian	13.4%
Bi- or multiracial	0.9%
Others	1.9%
Total (n=528)	100%

45. Household size: The median household size of the respondents was 5. While large households in Kuala Lumpur are quite usual, there is a slight bias in telephone survey for it would be more likely to complete successfully an interview with larger households.

Table III.6: Household size

Size	%
1	1.5%
2	7.1%
3	13.4%
4	20.5%
5	20.7%
6	18.0%
7 +	18.8%
Total (n=522)	100.0

46. Number of generations in the household: The majority (60%) of the households had 2 generations. A few households in the sample had 4 or more generations.

Table III.7: Number of generations in the household

Number of generations	%
1 generation	15.2%
2 generations	60.0%
3 generations	23.1%
4 generations	1.1%
5 generations	0.4%
6 generations	0.2%
Total (n=527)	100%

47. Overall view of the respondent profile: As in most telephone surveys, the profile of respondents has a slight bias towards more female, relatively more mature adults, and bigger households.

Appendix IV
Profile of respondents in Shenzhen Sample

48. Gender: 64.4% of the respondents were female. Similarly, this is the usual slightly over representation of female respondents in telephone survey.
49. Age: The age profile represents predominantly younger adults in Shenzhen.

Table IV.1: Age profile of respondents

Age groups	% among respondents
<20	13.0%
21 - 29	31.7%
30 - 39	21.3%
40 - 49	28.0%
50 - 59	4.1%
60 or above	1.7%
Total (n=460)	100%

50. Education Attainment: Relatively a large percentage of respondents (44.3%) have obtained university degree.

Table IV.2: Education attainment

Level of Education attainment	%
Primary or lower	0.6%
Junior Secondary	2.4%
Senior Secondary	22.2%
Junior College (中專)	4.5%
Senior College (大專)	24.5%
University degree	44.3%
Post-graduate	1.5%
Total (n=465)	100%

51. Economic activity: The sample has a high percentage of students (34.0%) and service and sale workers (25.9%).

Table IV.3: Economic Activity

Economic Activity	%
Management and executive	12.3%
Professional	10.4%
Assistant professional	0.9%
Clerical	4.6%
Service and sale workers	25.9%
Machinery assembly and operation worker	0.2%
Unskilled worker	2.8%
Students	34.0%
Homemaking	1.4%

Not classified	0.7%
Others (not economic active)	6.7%
Total (n=432)	100%

52. Earned income: The great majority (79.7%) of the respondents were earning RMB5,000 or below.

Table IV.4: Earned income per month

Eared income	%
Below RMB5,000	79.7%
RMB 5,000-9,999	14.8%
RMB 10,000-19,999	3.0%
RMB 20,000-29,999	2.2%
RMB 30,000-39,999	0.3%
Total (n=365)	100%

53. District of residence: Relatively a larger percentage (35.2%) of respondents resided in Futian District and a smaller percentage (4.5%) in Yantian District.

Table IV.5: District of residence

District	%
Louhu (羅湖)	14.0%
Futian(福田)	35.2%
NanShan (南山)	29.6%
Longgang (龍崗)	5.9%
Yantian (鹽田)	4.5%
Baoan (寶安)	10.9%
Total (n=494)	100%

54. Household size: The median household size of the respondents was 3.

Table IV.6: Household size

Size	%
1	1.3%
2	8.8%
3	53.2%
4	16.9%
5	13.4%
6	4.0%

7 +	2.5%
Total (n=479)	100.0

55. Number of generations in the household: The majority (70.8%) of the households had 2 generations. A few households in the sample had 4 or more generations.

Table IV.7: Number of generations in the household

Number of generations	%
1 generation	8.7%
2 generations	70.8%
3 generations	19.5%
4 or more generations	1.0%
Total (n=472)	100%

Appendix V

Profile of respondents in Taiwan sample and Major Findings

56. Half of the respondents were from Taipei and the other half were from Kaohsiung.
57. Gender: 57.8% of the respondents were female. Similarly, this is the usual slightly over representation of female respondents in telephone survey.
58. Age: The age distribution of respondents was quite even across different age groups.

Table V.1: Age profile of respondents

Age groups	% among respondents
18 - 20	3.2%
21 - 29	12.2%
30 - 39	18.3%
40 - 49	19.9%
50 - 59	24.5%
60 or above	21.9%
Total (n ⁴ =502)	100%

59. Education Attainment: The percentage of respondents with higher education (32.5% Degree or above) was apparently quite high. Again, this phenomenon was quite usual among telephone survey.

Table V.2: Education attainment

Level of Education attainment	%
Primary or lower	12.2%
Junior High	10.6%
Senior High	23.3%
Sub-degree(“專科”)	17.3%
University degree	31.1%
Graduate school/post-graduate	5.6%
Total (n=502)	100%

60. Economic activity: About half (54.0%) of the respondents were working. We also noted that in the sample the number of unemployed person is quite substantial, i.e. 7% of all respondents or 13% of all those who are economically active. About 1/4 (23.5%) of the respondents were home-makers.

Table V.3: Economic Activity

⁴ The “n” is different for different tables because of the variation in non-response.

Economic Activity	%
Elected officials, executive and management staff	4.2%
Professionals	5.0%
Technician and assistant professionals	8.2%
Clerical and administrative staff	14.1%
Service and sale workers	13.7%
Skill worker	2.2%
Machine assembly and operation worker	2.4%
Unskilled worker	3.6%
Agricultural and fishery worker	0.4%
Military	0.2%
Home making	23.5%
Student	5.2%
Retired	10.4%
Unemployed	7.0%
Total (n= 502)	100%

61. Earned income: The median income of those respondents who had an income was TWD31,612.

Table V.4: Income per month

Eared income	%
Below TWD20,000	28.4%
TWD20,000-39,999	37.2%
TWD40,000-59,999	20.2%
TWD60,000-79,999	5.5%
TWD80,000-99,999	2.5%
TWD100,000 or more	6.3%
Total (n=462)	100%

62. Household size: The median household size of the respondents was 4. While large households in Taiwan are quite usual, there is a slight bias in telephone survey for it would be more likely to complete successfully an interview with larger households.

Table V.6: Household size

Size	%
1	5.7%
2	10.9%
3	11.7%
4	28.3%
5	18.6%
6	10.9%
7 +	13.9%

Total (n=522)	100.0
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63. Number of generations in the household: The majority (60%) of the households had 2 generations. A few households in the sample had 4 or more generations.

Table V.7: Number of generations in the household

Number of generations	%
1 generation	14.1%
2 generations	54.9%
3 generations	29.8%
4 generations	1.2%
Total (n=502)	100%

Stress faced by the respondents and their families

64. We noted that questions that asked about “worries” tended to have slightly number of respondents to select answers “moderate” or “serious”. For example, more than 40% of the respondent indicated that the stress due to worry over one’s health problem and unemployment was moderate to serious.

Table V.8: Stress faced by the respondents and their families

	No such problem	Mild	Moderate	Serious
In debt	72.9%	9.4%	11.4%	6.4%
Tight financial condition	81.1%	6.0%	7.2%	5.8%
In-law relationship problem	91.6%	3.6%	3.4%	1.4%
Couple relationship problem	89.6%	4.0%	4.2%	2.2%
Parent-child relationship problem	90.2%	6.2%	2.2%	1.4%
Worry that child(ren) may not get the best educational opportunities	69.7%	4.6%	14.5%	11.2%
Difficulties in child discipline	82.9%	5.4%	8.8%	3.0%
Too long working hours / Too heavy workload	70.5%	4.0%	11.4%	14.1%
Worry about unemployment	50.2%	6.2%	25.1%	18.5%
Personal illness / Worry over own health problems	43.8%	8.2%	31.9%	16.1%
Needing to take care of family member(s) who are ill	75.9%	7.8%	8.8%	7.6%

65. Apart from the various worries, the most, relatively, prominent stressor is “too long working hours/too heavy workload”, where about 1/4 (25.5%) of the respondents felt that such problems were moderate to serious.