

“Parents of Primary School Students Survey: Knowledge of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention”

**Summary of Findings**

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From 13<sup>th</sup> April to 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2017, End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation (ECSAF) commissioned the Public Opinion Programme at The University of Hong Kong to conduct a survey entitled “Parents of Primary School Students Survey: Knowledge of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention.” With ECSAF staff support and frontline experience, the survey instrument was designed by Dr. Monit Cheung, Chairperson of the ECSAF Counseling Committee and Professor at the University of Houston. Random sampling from the general population was drawn. Phone interviews reached 508 parents who reportedly have at least one child studying in a primary school in Hong Kong, and their responses are in reference to the youngest child in primary school education.

Summary of Findings:

**1. Demographics of the Parent Respondents (N=508):**

- a. Gender: 321 (63.2%) respondents are mothers and 187 (36.8%) respondents are fathers.
- b. Age: The average age of these parents is 42.6 years old (standard deviation=6.21) with a median age of 42. Mother respondents are significantly younger (average age=40.45) than fathers (average age=46.1) ( $t=9.289$ ,  $df=251.89$ ,  $p<.001$ ).
- c. Age distribution: 2% of interviewees are 30 years of age or below; 40.9% are between 31 to 40 years old; 50.6% are between 41 to 50 years old; and 6.5% are above 51 years old.
- d. Areas of Residence: New Territories=258 (51%); Kowloon=161 (31.8%); Hong Kong Island=82 (16.2%); Islands=5 (1%). This sample’s percentages are close to the residence percentages of the general population in Hong Kong (NT=52.6%, Kowloon=30.2%, HK Island=17.2%).

**2. Demographics of the Referenced Children (N=508):**

- a. On the average, the youngest primary school child in the household is **8.8 years old**.
- b. Among the youngest primary school children, 452 (89%) children are studying in mainstream schools; 29 (5.7%) are students with special education needs studying in mainstream schools; 21 (4.1%) children are studying in international schools; 6 (1.2%) children are studying in special education schools.
- c. In the past year, parents live/stay with their children in an average of **11.9 months**.
- d. On the average, parents reported spending 5.3 hours daily with the referenced children: Fathers spent 3.95 hours with children per day, while mothers spent 6.05 hours with children per day. Mothers spent 2.1 more hours with the referenced child, comparing to fathers.

- e. Domestic workers (local or foreign) are the main caregivers of children: 41.5% of respondents employed one or more than one live-in domestic workers; 16.8% of respondents identified domestic workers (local or foreign) as the major caregivers for the referenced children.

### 3. Starting Age of Sexual Abuse Prevention Education:

- a. Respondents consider the most suitable age for children to receive education in child sexual abuse prevention is **6.5 years old**.
  - i. 98.2% think that such education should take place before or during a child's primary school stage (2-12 years of age).
  - ii. Among them, 73.2% responded the suitable ages from 5 to 10.
- b. **Three variables** are statistically related to educating children about child sexual abuse at an earlier age: being a mother, having a higher monthly household income, and having a higher education.
  - i. **Mothers** tend to prefer children to receive sexual abuse prevention education at a younger age: **6.23** years of age from mothers' responses vs. **7.05** years of age from fathers' responses ( $t = -3.595$ ,  $df = 499$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
  - ii. Parents with **higher monthly household income** tend to prefer children to receive sexual abuse prevention education at a younger age: **6.28** years of age from the respondents with household income at or higher than the sample median (\$45,000 per month) vs. **6.88** years of age from those with household income lower than the sample median ( $t = -2.635$ ,  $df = 450$ ,  $p = .009$ ).
  - iii. Parents with **higher education** tend to prefer children to receive sexual abuse prevention education at a younger age: **6.16** years of age from parents with post-secondary education or above, vs. **6.91** years of age from parents with up to secondary education ( $t = -3.432$ ,  $df = 487$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
- c. Parent's age is not statistically related to parent's preference of the starting age to receive sexual abuse prevention education. Whether a parent is younger or older than the sample's median age of 44, the preferred starting age to receive sexual abuse prevention education is on the average 6.5 years of age.

### 4. Parents' self-assessed knowledge competence in child sexual abuse prevention

- a. 298 (58.7%) of the respondents agree, while 135 (26.6%) disagree, that they have enough knowledge in child sexual abuse prevention.
- b. Child's age or parent's age is not significantly related to parent's knowledge competence on child sexual abuse prevention.

### 5. Positive aspects regarding knowledge on child sexual abuse

- a. 98.4% agree that "Parents should trustfully listen to their children when they express being abused" (孩子訴說被人性侵犯，家長應該用相信的態度去傾聽).
- b. 97.4% agree that "Child sexual abuse exists in every part of the world" (兒童性侵犯問題存在於世界各地).

- c. 94.9% agree that “Perpetrators of child sexual abuse have a high possibility of abusing other children” (性侵犯過兒童的人，很有可能會侵犯其他兒童).
  - d. 93.5% agree that “Children should receive child sexual abuse education at their primary school stage” (孩子應該在小學階段學習兒童性侵犯的知識).
  - e. 91.7% agree that “Perpetrators of child sexual abuse have a high possibility of re-abusing the same child victim(s)” (性侵犯過兒童的人，很有可能再多次侵犯同一個兒童).
  - f. 80.7% agree that “School is a place for children to learn child sexual abuse prevention and knowledge” (學校是學習有關預防兒童性侵犯知識的地方).
- 6. Misconception:** It is expected that parents would disagree the following misconceived statements but findings show that some parents did agree.
- a. 69.1% agree that “There would be wounds or other physical injuries on the body of a sexually abused child” (被性侵犯的兒童在身體上會有損傷) but indeed in many cases no wounds may be found.
  - b. 33.9% agree that “Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are mostly strangers” (性侵犯兒童的人，以陌生人佔多數) but indeed most perpetrators were known to the child victim.
  - c. 32.1% agree that “Children would understand child sexual abuse knowledge when they grew up” (孩子長大了自己就會明白有關性侵犯的知識) but indeed children need to equip with child sexual abuse prevention knowledge during their earlier developmental stage.
  - d. 24% agree that “Prevention of child sexual abuse education will make children know too much about sex” (預防兒童性侵犯的教育會令孩子對性知道得太多) but indeed getting correct information through education will prevent children from being affected by incorrect or inappropriate information about sex.
  - e. 10.4% of participants agree that “Females would not abuse children” (女性是不會性侵犯兒童) but indeed perpetrators, and even victims, of child sexual abuse could be of any gender.
- 7. Parents’ Readiness:**
- a. While 16.3% of the respondents agree that “Parents feel embarrassed when they discuss child sexual abuse prevention with their children” (與孩子講預防兒童性侵犯，家長會覺得很尷尬), this low percentage helps us realize that most parents feel that they are ready to participate in such discussion.
  - b. Most respondents have provided information for their children to understand sexual abuse prevention in the following areas:
    - i. “Never follows a stranger to any places that he asks you to go” (如果有一個陌生人叫你帶他去某某地方，你不要跟他走) (96.8%)
    - ii. Sexual organs of male and female (83.7%)
    - iii. Pregnancy (78.5%)
    - iv. Changes in puberty (72.8%)

- v. Dating (71.9%)
  - vi. Sexual abuse (67.9%)
  - vii. Homosexuality (51%)
- c. Fewer respondents have discussed other **sensitive** sexual education topics with children:
- i. Sexual behavior (38.8%)
  - ii. Sexually transmitted disease (18.5%)
  - iii. Cyber sexual activities, e.g. online naked chat (14.4%)
  - iv. Compensated dating (14.2%)
  - v. Sexual addiction (4.5%)

## 8. Means of Preventive Education:

- a. Most respondents consider that schools (n=408, 80.5%), mothers (n=328, 64.7%) and fathers (n=312, 61.5%) should hold the main responsibilities to teach about or to promote prevention of child sexual abuse.
- b. When the respondents could choose only one entity to deliver information about child sexual abuse to children, more than half of the participants have cast their votes on **mothers** (n=259, 51%), then schools (n=98, 19.3%) and then fathers (n=93, 18.3%).
- c. Most respondents have learned about prevention of child sexual abuse through **television or radio** (n=351, 69.1%), leaflet or flyer (n=296, 58.3%), and from school (n=281, 55.31%).
- d. Most participants educated their children about prevention of child sexual abuse through television or radio (n=233, 45.9%). However, 97 (19.1%) respondents have **never used any means** to talk about prevention of child sexual abuse with their children.
- e. When asked to choose the most **convenient means** for parents to learn about child sexual abuse, the respondents have cast their votes on **internet** (n=256, 50.4%), school (n=225, 44.3%) and television or radio (n=142, 28%).

## 9. Workshops on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention:

- a. 354 respondents (69.8%) agree to attend workshops **with their children** for the prevention of child sexual abuse, while 107 respondents (21.1%) disagree to attend.
- b. 320 respondents (63%) agree to attend workshops for parents on child sexual abuse prevention, while 139 participants (27.4%) disagree to attend.
- c. Respondents would like to practice how to discuss the following topics with their children in the workshops: **child sexual abuse** (n=184, 36.4%), sexual behaviors (n=43, 8.5%), and changes in puberty (n=42, 8.3%).

## 10. Conclusion

- a. Almost all parents (98.2%) prefer their children receiving sexual abuse prevention education before or during the primary school stage (2-12 years of age). Among them, 73.2% responded the suitable ages from 5 to 10.

- b. Parent education
  - i. Some parents have inadequate knowledge on child sexual abuse.
  - ii. Parents need to learn about the misconception on child sexual abuse in order to protect children.
  - iii. Mother was voted as the most suitable person to educate children about sexual abuse.
  - iv. Most respondents agree to attend workshops on child sexual abuse prevention.
  - v. It is important to develop tools and strategies to assist parents to educate their children about sexual abuse prevention, particularly through Internet access.
- c. Home-school Cooperation
  - i. Through parents' participation in child sexual abuse prevention education, children would feel safe to raise concerns and to differentiate inappropriate contacts.
  - ii. It is recommended that schools, parents and professional organizations cooperate in providing child sexual abuse prevention education.
  - iii. Workshops or other means of education are essential to adequately prepare parents in preventing child sexual abuse.
- d. Build a healthy Internet network.
  - i. Respondents agree that Internet is the most convenient means to learn about child sexual education prevention. It is recommended that a parenting network be formed as a resource in child sexual abuse prevention.
- e. Television/radio broadcasting
  - i. It is recommended that educational programs be provided through the mass media to disseminate accurate child sexual abuse prevention information for parents and children.
- f. Provide correct information for caregivers of children.
  - i. In order to educate the caregivers of children, the End Child Sexual Abuse Foundation created and distributed leaflets with regards to child protection information to local and foreign domestic workers.
- g. Consequences of sexual offenses
  - i. Child sexual abuse is a serious crime. While teaching children to protect themselves and to prevent sexual abuse, it is important to educate adults about the severity and consequences of child sexual abuse.