

## Parental expectations amongst Chinese parents in Hong Kong: Profiles and demographic correlates

**Daniel TL Shek<sup>1,\*</sup>, PhD, FHKPS, BBS, SBS,  
JP, Ching Man Lam<sup>2</sup>, PhD,  
and Xiaoqin Zhu<sup>1</sup>, PhD**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Applied Social Sciences,  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

<sup>2</sup>Social Work Department, The Chinese University  
of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, PR China

### Abstract

Parental expectations and aspirations for their children's future is an important domain that exerts profound impacts on children's development. However, research on parental expectations in Hong Kong is grossly inadequate. Using a culturally-sensitive measure of parental expectations, the present study investigated the profiles of Hong Kong Chinese parents' expectations on their children's future and the related demographic correlates. Based on the responses of 5,707 parents recruited through a non-probabilistic quota sampling involving five generational cohorts of Chinese parents in Hong Kong, the present study showed that Hong Kong Chinese parents generally possessed conventional and high expectations on most aspects of their children's future. However, the parents possessed diverse attitudes toward children's involvement in politics, being exceptional, having a good social status, and pursuit of equality. Regarding demographic correlates, it was found that parental expectations were significantly associated with parents' age, parental role, education level, employment status, and family income. Specifically, mothers or parents who were older, receiving a lower level of education, retired or living on social security assistance or earning lower family income had more conventional and higher expectations on children's future. The present pioneer findings portray a holistic picture showing both commonality and variance of Hong Kong Chinese parents' expectations.

**Keywords:** Parental expectations, Chinese parents, Chinese cultural values, Western values

### Introduction

According to the ecological perspective, family as the primary ecosystem where children grow up plays an important role in shaping child developmental outcomes. Parents' expectations, which represent parents' values and aspirations for their children's future achievements in education, social and economic domains, are considered one of the

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\* **Correspondence:** Daniel TL Shek, PhD, FHKPS, BBS, SBS, JP, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programme), Chair Professor of Applied Social Sciences and Li and Fung Professor in Service Leadership Education, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hunghom, Hong Kong, PR China. E-mail: daniel.shek@polyu.edu.hk

most influential family factors (1). For example, parental expectations on their children's academic success were positively associated with children's learning motivation and academic performance (2-4). There is also a wealth of empirical evidence showing that parental expectations on children's future significantly predicted children's psychosocial competence and behavior, including self-efficacy, cognitive competence, depressive symptoms, pro-social behaviors, aggression, and so forth (4-8). To some extent, parents' actions in socialization practices stem from their parental goals and expectations about what qualities a child should have and what a child should do (6, 9).

Based on the existing literature on parental expectations on children's future, three observations could be highlighted. First of all, parents generally have a high expectation on children's academic performance and educational achievement, which is closely associated with children's developmental outcomes in the academic domain (4, 10). In fact, the majority of studies in this area emphasized only on the educational dimension where researchers operationalized parental expectations by asking parents their expectations on children's course grades or future academic achievement indicated by the highest level of education (4, 11). In contrast, parental expectations on their children's non-academic attributes, such as independence or autonomy, self-confidence and "family-related" qualities have only been considered in relatively fewer studies. For example, it was mentioned that parents adopting progressive child-rearing beliefs often emphasize children's independence or autonomy (6). Few recent studies stressed the importance of "fulfilling family obligations" such as "obedience" or "respect for parents" in parental expectations (12, 13). To conclude, in addition to the dimension of education, it is necessary to investigate parental expectations from other aspects such as career development, economic status, family obligations, positive qualities, and so forth.

The second observation is that parental expectations on children's future vary from culture to culture. According to ecocultural theory, parenting practices and behaviors are guided by parental expectations and parenting goals, which are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs such as ideological values,

social norms and institutional patterns (9). While Western parents' expectations are built on individualistic values, Chinese parents are influenced by collectivistic Confucian thoughts. For example, while American mothers placed more emphasis on children's independence and anticipated self-confidence and assertiveness in their children, Chinese mothers highly valued interdependence and they stressed the importance of children's good relationships with others (14). A recent study also suggested that Chinese parents tended to rate children's family obligations as more important than European American parents (12). Therefore, investigation of parental expectations on children's future should be done with reference to social values and beliefs embedded in a specific culture.

A related issue is that there is a severe lack of research on parental expectations in the Chinese context. As pointed out by McCoy, Maître, Watson and Banks (15), "much of the research around parental educational expectations has come from the United States" (p. 537). Computer searches in Feb 2019 based on Scopus for the period of 1990-2019 using the term of "parent\* expectation" as the search term yielded 1,291 publications, among which 42 results were related to "child's future." The number dropped to 11 when using the search terms "parent\* expectation," "child\* future," and "Chinese." One possible reason is that cultural-specific measurement tools for Chinese parents' expectations on children's future are basically non-existent (16). Against this background, it is necessary to investigate Chinese parents' expectations of their children's future by operationally defining the concept with cultural sensitivity. It is especially critical when studying the relevant topic among Hong Kong Chinese parents given Hong Kong's unique history.

On one hand, Hong Kong is predominantly a Chinese community where parental belief systems are profoundly shaped by Confucian philosophy. Specifically, cultivation of virtues such as "*li*" (propriety), "*yi*" ("righteousness"), "*ren*" ("benevolences"), "*zhi*" ("wisdom") and "*xin*" ("trustworthiness") is of principal importance in Confucianism. Besides, Confucian thoughts consider education the primary means of achieving personal success and highlight related attributes that lead to educational

achievement, such as diligence and effort. These ideas are clearly reflected in traditional Chinese sayings like “*wan ban jie xia pin, wei you du shu gao*” (“all jobs are low in status, except study which is the highest”) and “*qin neng bu zhuo*” (“diligence is a means by which one makes up for one’s dullness”). Fulfilling family obligation constitutes another important element of traditional Chinese culture. Children are socialized to prioritize familial and societal needs rather than individual needs. For instance, “*xiao*” (“filial piety”), “*chuan zong jie dai*” (“pass the line”) and “*guang zong yao zu*” (“bring honor to one’s families”) are traditionally emphasized as children’s obligations and responsibilities. Influenced by these ideas, Chinese parents would expect their children to have a high educational achievement, fulfill family obligations and develop traditional virtues such as politeness, morality, and righteousness (16).

On the other hand, after being a British colony for nearly 150 years, Hong Kong has become a melting point for Chinese and Western cultural values. It is argued that subculture in Hong Kong is more modernized and Westernized than that of Mainland China, which may result in less collectivism and more individualism in Hong Kong than in Mainland China. Thus, although traditional Chinese values have a significant influence in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Chinese parents may differ from their Mainland Chinese counterparts regarding parenting practices and socialization goals. This argument has been supported by several pieces of empirical evidence (17, 18). However, most studies on parenting in Hong Kong were guided only by Confucian values but failed to acknowledge the different historical and cultural contexts of Hong Kong from the generalized Chinese culture (19). This is the case in the research field of parental expectations. For example, several recent studies have investigated Hong Kong Chinese parents’ expectations on their children’s future by taking into account only traditional Confucian values (13, 20). Therefore, to fully address the related research gaps, the investigation of Hong Kong Chinese parents’ expectations should consider both traditional Chinese values and Western values, such as democracy, independence and justice.

The third observation is that there may be linkages between parental expectations of children’s future and demographic factors, such as parental roles (i.e., fathers versus mothers), parents’ education level and economic status. This is because parents’ own knowledge, learning experiences and living conditions may exert influence on their understanding and interpretation of parenting and socialization goals. For example, Tocu’s (21) study showed that parents with a higher level of education had stronger progressive childrearing beliefs and considered children’s autonomy more important. This study also found that fathers had stronger traditional attitudes toward childrearing and valued children’s conformity more than mothers. Additionally, middle-class fathers and mothers were more likely to value autonomy in their children than their working-class counterparts (22). Apart from these indirect supportive findings, direct evidence comes from research on parental educational expectation for their children. For example, parental expectations on children’s academic achievement were positively predicted by parents’ own education level and family income (23–25). However, none of these studies were carried out in the Chinese context. Furthermore, to expand the scope of research, not only the educational dimension, but also economic, familial and social dimensions of parental expectations should be covered.

To sum up, there are mainly two research gaps. First, compared with ample research on parents’ educational expectation for children, there is a dearth of research considering other dimensions of parental expectations on their children’s future. Second, given the unique history of Hong Kong, it is important to investigate Chinese parents’ expectations in Hong Kong as a special Chinese community that is different from Mainland China. However, limited evidence is available for understanding the profiles and demographic correlates of Hong Kong Chinese parents’ expectations on children’s future. To address these two research gaps, the present study attempted to investigate Hong Kong Chinese parents’ expectations on children’s future using a culturally-sensitive measurement tool. Profile of responses and demographic correlates of parental expectations were the foci of the present study.

## Methods

The present study was approved by the Survey and Behavioural Ethics Committee of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. A non-probabilistic quota sampling method was used to recruit Chinese parents from five generational cohorts between the 1970s and the 2010s in Hong Kong. With the aim of achieving a sample of 0.1% of each cohort based on the most updated census data (26), parents were recruited through multiple sources including elderly centers, NGOs, parent education association, universities, secondary and primary schools, kindergartens, and the Internet.

The final sample consisted of 5,707 participants, among whom 1,770 (31.0%) were fathers and 3,710 (61.5%) were mothers. The participants aged between 21 to 97, and the mean age of fathers and mothers was 54.11 ( $SD = 12.20$ ) and 51.00 ( $SD = 13.94$ ), respectively. Regarding the participants' educational achievement, around 14.2%, 17.1%, 31.1%, 6.7%, 24.2%, and 4.7% participants had an education level at primary school or below, junior secondary school, senior secondary school, matriculation, college or university, and postgraduate or above, respectively. Besides, 45.7% and 10.6% of participants had full-time or part-time jobs, respectively. Among the remaining, 17.7% were homemakers, 1.3% were unemployed or between jobs, 20.9% were retired, and 1.8% were living on social security schema. With regard to monthly family income, 21% had HK\$14,999 or below, 46% were between HK\$15,000 and HK\$49,999, and around 27% had HK\$50,000 or above. More details about the demographic profile of the respondents are reported elsewhere (27).

### Measures

Multiple measures were used in the survey. The parental expectation of Hong Kong Chinese parents was the focus of the present study. The participants were asked to rate the importance of 24 parental expectations for their children's attributes on a 5-point scale (1 = "not at all important," 5 = "very important"). Sample items included "I expect my children to be able to distinguish between right and

wrong," "I expect my children to respect the elders," "I expect my children to respect human rights" and "I expect my children to have a successful career." A higher score indicates that a more conventional parental expectation which represents a higher expectation as well.

The Hong Kong Chinese Parental Expectation Scale (HKCPE) used in the present study was developed by the research team using a three-step process. First, in-depth individual interviews with 60 parents (two 1.5-hour interviews for each parent) on their offspring rearing experiences were conducted. Based on the interviewees' responses, a culturally adapted scale on parents' expectations on their children's future was created. Second, four professors in the research team conducted expert rating to examine the face validity of the original items. After dropping redundant or ambiguous items and items which were difficult to categorize, 34 items were retained to form a preliminary quantitative measure. Third, the 34-item scale was subject to preliminary reliability analyses in a pilot validation trial involving 805 Hong Kong Chinese parents. After deleting 10 items with low reliability, a 24-item HKCPE was obtained and further tested in the present study. The 24 items represented parental goals reflecting both traditional Chinese cultural (e.g., respect for the elders, honesty, and establishment of a normal family) and Western cultural (e.g., independence, respect for human rights, and pursuit of equality) values.

Apart from the above measure, we also included measures of gender expectation differences, division of labour in parenting tasks, beliefs in parental roles and responsibilities (27). Finally, we also collected information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, parental role (i.e., fathers or mothers), educational achievement, employment status, and family income.

### Data analyses

All data analyses were performed by the statistical package of SPSS 25 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). First, reliability analyses were performed to investigate the psychometric properties of the

HKCPE. Second, the profile of participants' responses on each item was examined. Third, a correlational analysis was conducted to examine the correlation coefficient between parental expectation and age. Finally, several one-way between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine the differences in parents' expectation on children's future in relation to different conditions of socio-demographic variables including parental role, educational achievement, employment status, and family income.

## Results

Reliability analyses showed that the Cronbach's alpha of the HKCPE was .92, suggesting good internal consistency among the items. In addition, item-total correlation coefficients ranged between .31 and .66 and the mean inter-item correlation was .35. These findings suggest good reliability of the 24-item HKCPE used in the present study.

### *Profile of responses*

As shown in Table 1, except for three items (item 12, 13, and 15), other 21 items had a mean score over 4 on a 5-point rating scale, suggesting that Hong Kong Chinese parents considered most of the listed qualities important in children, reflecting a relatively conventional expectation on offspring's future. Over 70% of the participants considered the respective expectations important on 20 items. For example, over 95% of the respondents rated "be able to distinguish between right and wrong," "respect the elders," and "have a sense of responsibility" as important. For the four exceptions (i.e., item 12, 13, 17, and 24), 34.27%, 56.14%, 50.64%, and 66.80% of the participants considered "not involve in politics", "be an ordinary person," "have a good social status," and "pursue equality" important, respectively. These findings indicate that while Chinese parents in Hong Kong generally hold a conventional expectation on most aspects, they had diverse views on children's involvement in politics, being exceptional, having a good social status and equality.

### *Socio-demographic correlates*

First, Person correlational analysis showed that parents' expectation was significantly correlated with age ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r^2 = 0.006$ ), suggesting that parental expectation was more conventional and higher if the parent was older.

Second, results of several one-way ANOVAs indicated the significant effects of the demographic variables on parents' expectation ( $F$  ranged between 6.47 and 29.42,  $ps < 0.001$ , see Table 2). Post-hoc comparisons using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test were further performed to investigate how parents differed from each other in their expectation with regard to different demographic conditions.

For parental role, mothers ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ) held a more conventional and higher expectation on children's future than did fathers ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ,  $F = 29.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , see Figure 1).

For educational achievement, parents with the lowest level (i.e., primary school or below) had the highest score ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ), suggesting a most conventional parental expectation among them. In contrast, parents with the highest educational achievement (i.e., graduate school or above) scored lowest ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.45$ ), suggesting that these parents held the least conventional expectation. Parents who completed junior ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) or senior secondary ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) school, matriculated ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ), or completed university education ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ) did not significantly differ from each other in their expectations on children's future (see Figure 2).

With regard to employment status, participants working full-time had the least conventional expectation, with their mean score ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.44$ ) significantly lower than that of participants working as full-time homemakers ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ), being retired ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ), or receiving social security allowance ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ). In contrast, participants who were retired or social security recipients had the most conventional expectation as they scored significantly higher than parents with other types of employment status (see Figure 3).

For family income, parents with the lowest family monthly income (i.e., less than HK\$4,000) scored the

highest ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ), indicating that they had the most conventional parental expectation. For parents having other levels of family monthly income (all above HK\$4,000), there were only minor or insignificant differences in their expectations on children's future (see Figure 4).

**Table 1. Profile of responses (N = 4,989-5,692)**

I expect my children to	Mean	SD	1		2		3		4		5		Positive response (options 4-5)	
			Not important at all		Slightly unimportant		Neutral		Slightly important		Very important			
			N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
能夠分辨是非 be able to distinguish between right and wrong	4.73	0.58	16	0.28	32	0.56	218	3.82	913	16.00	4513	79.08	5426	95.08
是有家教的人 is a well-bred person	4.67	0.60	16	0.28	28	0.49	225	3.94	1277	22.38	4138	72.51	5415	94.88
懂得待人接物 have interpersonal skills	4.59	0.64	19	0.33	21	0.37	285	4.99	1618	28.35	3739	65.52	5357	93.87
尊敬長輩 respect the elders	4.67	0.59	14	0.25	23	0.40	205	3.59	1329	23.29	4117	72.14	5446	95.43
包容及接納別人 be inclusive and accept others	4.52	0.66	13	0.23	31	0.54	369	6.47	1829	32.05	3434	60.17	5263	92.22
不貪便宜, 能吃虧 will not go after petty advantages and can bear losses	4.39	0.74	28	0.49	46	0.81	569	9.97	2105	36.88	2936	51.45	5041	88.33
做正直的人 be an honest person	4.65	0.61	14	0.25	26	0.46	238	4.17	1375	24.09	4030	70.62	5405	94.71
可以建立正常家庭 be able to establish a normal family	4.52	0.71	18	0.32	42	0.74	491	8.60	1543	27.04	3580	62.73	5123	89.77
追求公義 pursue justice	4.20	0.82	33	0.58	93	1.63	963	16.87	2180	38.20	2408	42.19	4588	80.39
尊重人權 respect human rights	4.25	0.81	31	0.54	69	1.21	929	16.28	2092	36.66	2556	44.79	4648	81.44
有責任心 have a sense of responsibility	4.71	0.56	13	0.23	20	0.35	157	2.75	1200	21.03	4286	75.10	5486	96.13
不碰政治 not involve in politics	3.26	1.07	404	7.08	573	10.04	2705	47.40	1066	18.68	890	15.59	1956	34.27
做個普通人 be an ordinary person	3.70	0.96	159	2.79	246	4.31	2039	35.73	1917	33.59	1287	22.55	3204	56.14
人生能有自主 have independent life	4.39	0.71	18	0.32	38	0.67	530	9.29	2183	38.25	2889	50.62	5072	88.87
事業有成 have a successful career	4.03	0.86	45	0.79	146	2.56	1322	23.16	2222	38.93	1934	33.89	4156	72.82
能自力更生 be independent	4.61	0.63	15	0.26	29	0.51	268	4.70	1525	26.72	3828	67.08	5353	93.80
有好的社會地位 have a good social status	3.57	0.97	173	3.03	375	6.57	2223	38.95	1820	31.89	1070	18.75	2890	50.64
能有競爭力 be competitive	4.11	0.82	40	0.70	118	2.07	1019	17.86	2498	43.77	1984	34.76	4482	78.54
會結婚, 有個伴 will get married and have a partner	4.07	0.97	109	1.91	198	3.47	1202	21.06	1811	31.73	2347	41.12	4158	72.86
至少大學畢業 graduate from university	4.01	1.00	151	2.65	227	3.98	1234	21.62	1877	32.89	2175	38.11	4052	71.00
是異性戀 are heterosexual	4.01	1.19	380	6.66	226	3.96	1009	17.68	1321	23.15	2681	46.98	4002	70.12
有解難的能力 have the ability of problem solving	4.50	0.67	16	0.28	31	0.54	372	6.52	1944	34.06	3306	57.93	5250	91.99
尊重法治 respect the rule of law	4.39	0.77	23	0.40	64	1.12	544	9.53	1620	28.39	2639	46.24	4259	74.63
追求平等 pursue equality	4.12	0.84	40	0.70	99	1.73	938	16.44	1980	34.69	1832	32.10	3812	66.80

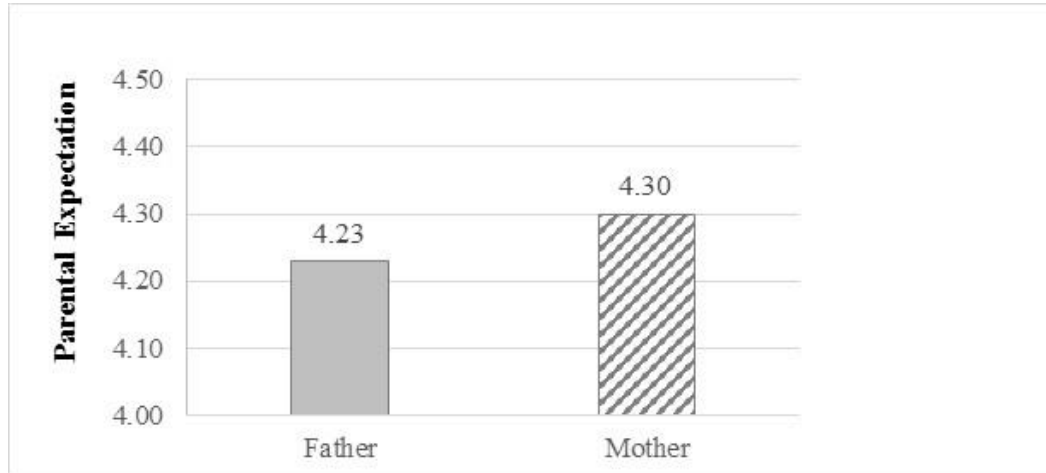


Figure 1. Parental expectation as a function of parental role.

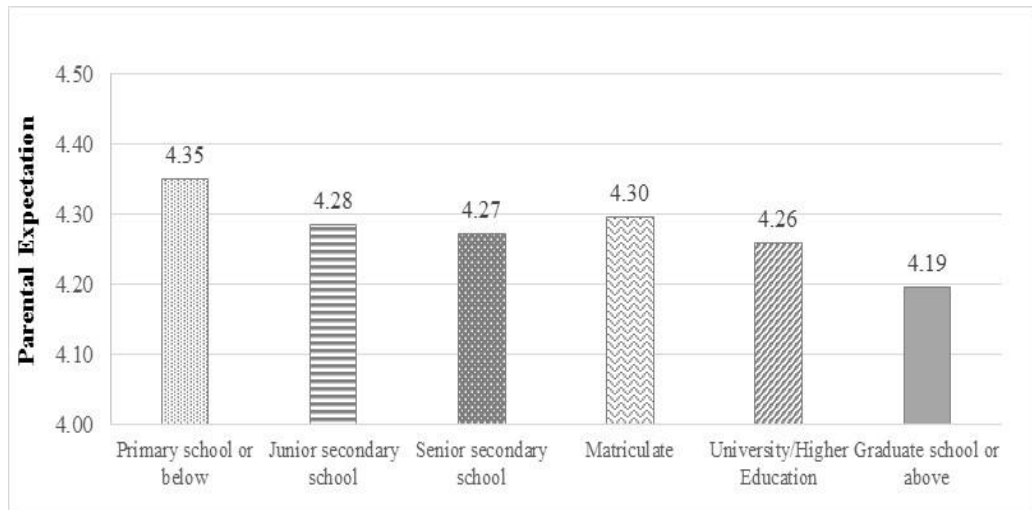


Figure 2. Parental expectation as a function of parents' education level.

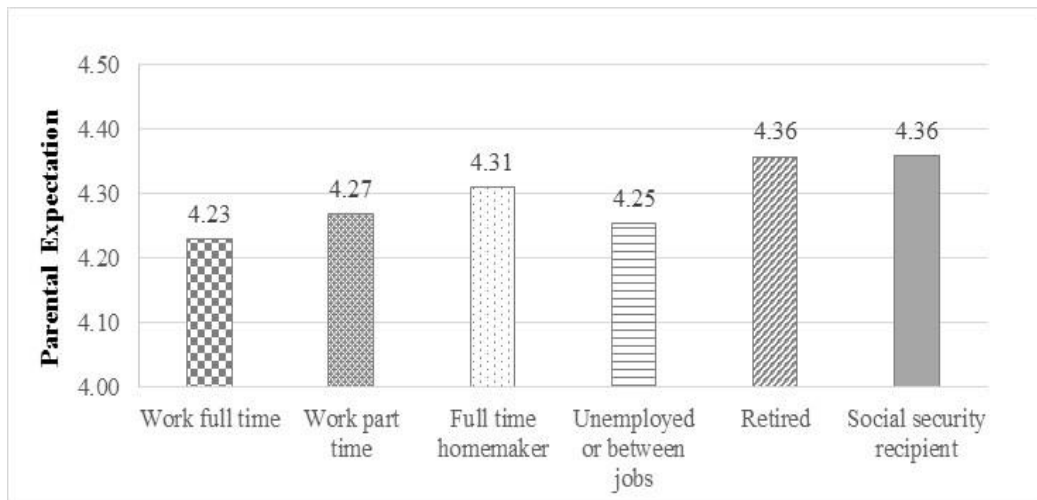


Figure 3. Parental expectation as a function of parents' employment status.

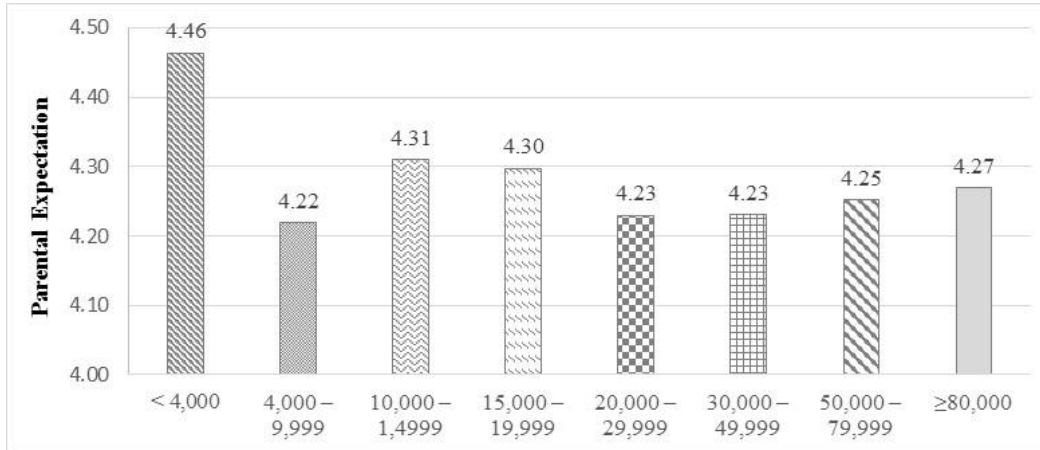


Figure 4. Parental expectation as a function of family monthly income (\$HK).

Table 2. One-way ANOVAs

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>
Parental role				29.42***
Father	1769	4.23	0.47	
Mother	3709	4.30	0.45	
Education level				6.47***
Primary school or below	812	4.35	0.56	
Junior secondary school	976	4.28	0.48	
Senior secondary school	1773	4.27	0.47	
Matriculate	380	4.30	0.41	
University/Higher Education	1380	4.26	0.39	
Graduate school or above	268	4.19	0.45	
Employment status				14.80***
Work full-time	2608	4.23	0.44	
Work part-time	606	4.27	0.44	
Full-time homemaker	969	4.31	0.43	
Unemployed or between jobs	75	4.25	0.49	
Retired	1191	4.36	0.53	
Social security recipient	101	4.36	0.52	
Family monthly income (HK\$)				14.19***
< 4,000	397	4.46	0.46	
4,000 – 9,999	284	4.22	0.57	
10,000 – 14,999	494	4.31	0.53	
15,000 – 19,999	569	4.30	0.45	
20,000 – 29,999	869	4.23	0.47	
30,000 – 49,999	1167	4.23	0.43	
50,000 – 79,999	864	4.25	0.41	
≥80,000	690	4.27	0.41	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .



## Discussion

The present study represents a pioneer attempt to examine the profile of responses and demographic correlates of Hong Kong Chinese parents' expectations on children's future. There are several strengths of the present study. First, this study investigated parental expectations in a sample of the Chinese population, who constitute one-fifth of the world's population but have been under-researched in related fields (15). Second, the culturally-sensitive measurement tool on parental expectations used in the present study took into account values and beliefs embedded in both Chinese and Western cultures. This ecological approach adds great value to the existing literature on parenting in Hong Kong which commonly ignored the influence of Western values (19). Third, instead of focusing merely on parents' educational expectation for children, the present study looked at parental expectations from multiple aspects including economic, familial and social dimensions. Such a comprehensive investigation helps delineate a holistic profile of Chinese parents' expectations on children's future in Hong Kong.

Generally speaking, Hong Kong Chinese parents perceived that most of the expected achievements and qualities (e.g., establishing family, successful career, and virtues) were important, reflecting a conventional and relatively high expectation regarding children's future. For instance, over 70% of the parents treated "successful career," "competitiveness" and "completion of university study" as important for their children, echoing the general consensus that Chinese parents place great importance on children's academic achievement (28, 29). Furthermore, over 90% of the parents highly expected morality, politeness, honesty, responsibility, and social skills in their children. Noteworthy, these qualities can be regarded as features of a "virtuous person" stressed by Confucianism, suggesting that parents' socialization goals are consistent with core Confucian values. Basically, our observation is consistent with a recent finding that poor Chinese parents in Hong Kong had high expectation toward children's education, fulfillment of family obligation and behavior (20). These findings together echo the famous Chinese saying about parental expectation: "*wang zi cheng*

*long*" ("hope that children will become outstanding and successful persons").

However, parents' diverse views toward some aspects of children's future should also be noted. First, although most parents expected their children to become good, well-educated and successful persons, nearly half of the parents did not consider "a good social status" as important for children. This appears inconsistent with a finding in another Confucian Heritage Culture society, South Korea, where parents had high expectations as well and strongly emphasized on their children's academic achievement as a means to gain wealth and higher social status (30, 31). One possible reason of the present finding is that Hong Kong Chinese parents see that attainment of wealth and high social status are very stressful for their children. As a result, they tend to place less emphasis on the importance of high social status.

Second, over 65% of the parents did not mind children's involvement in politics and agreed that "pursuit of equality" was important. At the same time, "pursuit of justice", "respect for human rights" and "respect for the rule of law" in children were endorsed by the majority of the parents. These findings imply that a considerable proportion of Chinese parents in Hong Kong are open to Western liberal thoughts that value equality, democratic and young people's voice in social issues including political issues. Recently, other scholars also noticed that Hong Kong Chinese parents may adhere to both Chinese and Western values in childrearing and parenting actions (7,27). However, nearly 35% of the parents thought that not engaging in politics is important. This may be due to the fact that involvement in politics might be harmful to young people when we look at Chinese history in the past century.

Regarding demographic correlates, several observations could be highlighted. First, parental expectation was positively correlated with parents' age, indicating that younger parents imposed more unconventional expectations on their children. Besides, parents who were retired reported most conventional and highest expectations, which is related to the age effect as the retired parents should be older. Similar to our findings, a recent study reported that younger generations of parents in Hong Kong adopted love and nurturing parenting beliefs more than the older generations, suggesting a

changing conception of childrearing and parental goals (27). As the present study is the first one that directly relates parental expectations to their age, the finding should be tested in more studies in future.

Second, mothers' expectation was higher than that of fathers. This appears to be inconsistent with Tocu's finding that fathers had stronger traditional attitudes toward childrearing in Romania (21). However, the present finding is in line with the result of one previous study in Hong Kong which found that Chinese mothers scored higher than did fathers on parental expectations of children's future (20). Mothers' higher expectations echo the shift of a traditional thesis from "strict fathers and kind mothers" to "kind fathers and strict mothers" (32). One possible explanation is that Chinese mothers have been playing a more and more salient role in taking care of and educating children in family (20), which shapes the mothers to have higher expectations on children.

Third, parents with lower educational achievement or lower family income had more conventional parental expectations such as higher expectation on children's educational, career, and familial achievement. A related finding is that social security recipients, who are supposed to have low family income, reported higher expectations on children's future. Our finding seems to be in line with Tocu's observation that parents with a lower education level had stronger traditional childrearing beliefs (21). However, these findings are inconsistent with a recent study conducted in mainland China reported that parents with lower social-economic status had lower expectations for their children (29). Previous research in other cultures ALSO showed that parental educational expectation for children was positively associated with parents' own education level and family income (23-25). Given the equivocal findings, future research needs to directly compare the associations between parental expectation and parents' education level and income in different cultures.

While the present study is pioneer in nature, it has several limitations. First, a quantitative research design was used. As the quantitative findings obtained in the present study are not able to reveal in-depth subjective feelings behind the numbers, such as why

some parents did not value social status in children, future research should apply mix-methods design consisting of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Second, although Hong Kong represents a unique Chinese community and it is of great importance to examine parental expectations in Hong Kong, it is necessary to conduct related research in other Chinese communities to enhance the universality of the present findings. Besides, it will be illuminating to compare findings obtained in different Chinese communities and reveal potential differences. Third, the present study only considered parents' gender but not children's gender. Although it is traditionally believed that Chinese parents put higher expectations on sons, there is empirical research failed to identify such a gender effect in Macao (33). Another study even identified unexpected higher parental expectation on daughters in Mainland China (29). Concerning the inconclusive findings, it will be interesting to directly compare parental expectations on boys and girls in Hong Kong and other Chinese societies. Nevertheless, together with other papers generated from this project (34, 35), this research project promotes our understanding of parenting expectations in Hong Kong.

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## **Ethical compliance**

The authors have stated all possible conflicts of interest within this work. The authors have stated all sources of funding for this work. If this work involved human participants, informed consent was received from each individual. If this work involved human participants, it was conducted in accordance with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. If this work involved experiments with humans or animals, it was conducted in accordance with the related institutions' research ethics guidelines.

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