

**Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education**

**Liberal Studies**

**Structured Enquiry Approach**

**Independent Enquiry Study Report**

Standard Covering Page (for written reports and short written texts of non-written reports starting from 2017)

Enquiry Question: To study the mental and physical problems of single-parent families

Year of Examination: 2017

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Class/ Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of words in the report: 2788

Notes:

1. Written reports should not exceed 4500 words. The reading time for non-written reports should not exceed 22 minutes and the short written texts accompanying non-written reports should not exceed 1100 words. The word count for written reports and the short written texts does not include the covering page, the table of contents, titles, graphs, tables, captions and headings of photos, punctuation marks, footnotes, endnotes, references, bibliography and appendices.
2. Candidates are responsible for counting the number of words in their reports and the short written texts and indicating it accurately on this covering page.
3. If the Independent Enquiry Study Report of a student is selected for review by the School-Based Assessment System, the school should ensure that the student's name, class/ group and class number have been deleted from the report before submitting it to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. Schools should also ensure that the identities of both the schools and students are not disclosed in the reports. For non-written reports, the identities of the students and schools, including the appearance of the students, should be deleted.

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**Title: To study the mental and physical problems of single-parent families**

### **A. Problem Identification**

#### **1. Significance of the study (why it worth to study)**

Home should be our most reliable and robust fortress, refuge of life adversity and the important source of happiness in life. However, the number of single-parent families keeps increasing nowadays. Such families have special needs and difficulties. It will directly affect the physical and mental health and personality development of family members, and indirectly affect social stability.

As a member in this society, we should try to understand more about how the single-families are different from the normal one. So we can give them help and support. Therefore, I would like to study the mental and physical problems of single-parent families and try to find ways to help with it. Through this study, people can understand more about the single-parent families. And try to find some method to help with the problems of them and support them.

#### **2. Focus/objectives of study**

The objectives of this project are-

- (i) To understand more about the mental and physical problems of single-parent families
- (ii) To find ways to help with the problem of the single-parent families

#### **3. Scope/target of study**

Through this study, people can understand more about the single-parent families. And try to find some method to help with the problems of them and support them.

#### **4. Focus questions (3 questions)**

- (i) What are the mental and physical problems of single-parent families?
- (ii) How those problems affect the single-parent families?
- (iii) How can we help the single-parent families?

## **B. Relevant Concept**

### 1. Define Concepts

Single-parent families are families with children under age 18 headed by a parent *who is widowed or divorced and not remarried, or by a parent who has never married.*<sup>1</sup> A single parent, sometimes called a solo parent, is a parent, not living with a spouse or partner, who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in raising the child or children. A single parent is usually considered the primary caregiver, meaning the parent the children have residency with the majority of the time. If the parents are separated or divorced, children live with their custodial parent and have visitation or secondary residence with their noncustodial parent. In western society in general, following separation, a child will end up with the primary caregiver, usually the mother, and a secondary caregiver, usually the father.

### 2. Fact/background/knowledge/data

(i) "Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Single Parents" published [21 Feb 2013]<sup>2</sup>

According to the results of the 2011 Population Census, there were a total of 81 705 single parents in 2011. The number of single parents increased continuously over the past 10 years, from 61 431 in 2001 to 81 705 in 2011.

Single parents are defined as mothers or fathers who are never married, widowed, divorced or separated, with child(ren) aged under 18 living with them in the same household. It should be noted that the definition of single parents has been slightly revised by expanding the coverage to include mothers or fathers who are never married and living with child(ren) aged under 18 in the same household. There were 2 971 and 4 861 single parents who were never married in 2001 and 2011 respectively.

Single mothers far outnumbered single fathers throughout the past 10 years. The number of single mothers grew by 35.6% from 47 215 in 2001 to 64 040 in 2011, whereas the number of single fathers increased by 24.3% from 14 216 in 2001 to 17 665 in 2011. On the whole, majority of single parents were aged 30-49, with the proportion of single mothers in this age group at 82.2% and that of single fathers at 59.5%. In 2011, the median age of single fathers was 47.4, compared with 42.5 of single mothers.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.healthofchildren.com/S/Single-Parent-Families.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/press\\_release/pressReleaseDetail.jsp?charsetID=1&pressRID=3351](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/press_release/pressReleaseDetail.jsp?charsetID=1&pressRID=3351)

In 2011, there were 47 717 working single parents, consisting of 12 407 working single fathers and 35 310 working single mothers. A large proportion of the working single parents were engaged as "Service and sales workers" (26.7%), "Elementary occupations" (19.7%) or "Clerical support workers" (17.3%).

Nearly 80% of single parents were living with their child(ren) only in 2011. Most of the single parents lived with 1 dependent child and the average number of dependent children for a single parent was 1.3. Besides, 52.4% and 37.8% of the single parents lived in public rental housing and private permanent housing respectively.

Further details about the characteristics of single parents are available in the publication entitled "Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Single Parents" which has been published today (February 21). Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD

Ends/Thursday, February 21, 2013

Issued at HKT 15:00

(ii) LCQ15: Support for single parent families<sup>3</sup>

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-hing and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council today (July 6):

Question:

Regarding financial support for single parent families, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of single parent families in Hong Kong and the number of children in these families in each of the past three years;

(b) of the number of single parent families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) in each of the past three years (as at May 31, of each year), together with a breakdown by gender of the single parent (i.e. father or mother), number of children and area of residence;

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200507/06/07060148.htm>

(c) among the single parent families receiving CSSA in each of the past three years (as at May 31 of each year), of the number of those in which the children are eligible for CSSA but their fathers or mothers are not because they have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years, together with a breakdown by gender of the parents (i.e. father or mother), number of children and area of residence; and

(d) whether the authorities have any plans to offer assistance in such areas as finance, employment, housing, after school care services for children, etc, to those single parent families in which the fathers or mothers have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years and are therefore not eligible for CSSA; if so, of the details?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) The yearly number of single parent families in Hong Kong and the number of children aged below 18 in these families can be retrieved from the General Household Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department. The figures between 2002 and 2004 are listed in Table 1.

(b) Single parent cases are defined as those cases where the single parent is living with at least one child, and all members are eligible for CSSA. Relevant statistics in respect of single parent CSSA cases in the past three years are listed in Table 2, 3, 4 and 5.

(c) As for the number of CSSA cases in which the children are eligible for CSSA but their single fathers or mothers are not because they have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years, since single parent CSSA cases are defined as cases where the single parent is already eligible for CSSA, such cases would not be classified as *single parent CSSA cases*. As the Social Welfare Department does not have information on family members who are not eligible for CSSA, there is insufficient information to compile the relevant figures requested.

(d) The Administration has always attached importance to the service needs of the disadvantaged groups, including the single parents who have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years. For those who do not meet the seven years residence requirement but demonstrating real financial difficulty, the Director of Social Welfare could exercise his discretion to waive the residence requirement under CSSA scheme in *granting financial assistance*. There are also a wide range of services and programmes to cater for their needs

3. Research method and explain how to implement
  - I. Collect background information for the study
  - II. Set the direction and goal for it,
  - III. Set the focus questions

### **C.In-depth Explanation of the Issue**

According to the research, Hong Kong 2011 Population Census Thematic Report: Single Parents, there were a total of 81 705 single parents in 2011. The number of single parents increased continuously over the past 10 years, from 61 431 in 2001 to 81 705 in 2011. This shows that the number of single-parent families increased rapidly.

The article followed by a question by the Hon Wong Kwok-hing and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council stated that there are a wide range of services and programmes to cater for their needs as follows:

#### **(i) Financial support**

For single parents who are in need of assistance, they may apply to SWD for charitable trust funds through the service units of SWD or the non-government organizations to help tide over their short-term financial difficulties.

#### **(ii) Employment Assistance and Support**

There is no residence requirement for the various employment services provided by the Labour Department. The vocational training and re-training programmes subsidized by the Government or statutory levy (e.g. Vocational Training Council, Construction Industry Training Authority, Clothing Industry Training Authority and Employees Retraining Board), Skills Upgrading Schemes and Continuing Education Fund do not have any residence requirement.

#### **(iii) Housing Need**

For single parents who have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years but are unable to meet their urgent need of long-term housing due to exceptional difficulties or health problems, they may seek for compassionate rehousing by Housing Department upon SWD's recommendation for immediate allocation of public housing flats that suit their needs. On the other hand, single parents who are public housing tenants with

short-term financial difficulties but are not receiving CSSA may apply for a 50 per cent rental reduction.

#### (iv) Care Services for Children

Any families in need, including single parents who have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years, may use the services of the full-time day child care centres/kindergartens for their children aged zero to six. In addition, fee assistance/remission schemes are available. Some child care centres/kindergartens also offer extended hours service and/or occasional child care services. Moreover, the single parents in need may arrange their children aged 6 to 12 to attend the after school care programme.

These are the methods that can help the single-parent families. However, the services are not enough to deal with the problems.

According to an article<sup>4</sup>, The Special Issue on Contemporary Issues in Social Science, by Centre for Promoting Ideas, USA, the general effects of divorce are:

- Loss of concentration and attention
- Declining grades and behavior problems at school
- Withdrawal from friends
- Emotional outbursts and health problems
- Serious anger with one or both parents
- Delinquency and substance use (samhsa.gov, 2011).

The services mentioned above only help with the physical needs and cannot solve the mental problems of the single-parent children. The government should improve the services.

### **D. Judgement and Justification**

From the research, it is found that there are some bad influences to the single-parent families. The services of the government can help the single-parent families with their physical needs. However, they cannot help with the mental problems of the single-parent families. Therefore, much attention must be given to the mental problems of them.

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Hakan Usakli, "Comparison of Single and Two Parents Children in terms of Behavioral Tendencies"



The government should enhance the service of social workers. More social workers should be delivered to different communities. Talks and workshops about emotional management are also needed.

### **Bibliography**

#### Websites:

1. [http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/press\\_release/pressReleaseDetail.jsp?charsetID=1&pressRID=3351](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/press_release/pressReleaseDetail.jsp?charsetID=1&pressRID=3351)

2. <http://www.neartnotchildren.com/S/Single-Parent-Families.ntml>

3. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200507/06/07060148.htm>

#### Documents:

1. Dr. Hakan Usakli, "Comparison of Single and Two Parents Children in terms of Behavioral Tendencies"

Title	Marks*		Comments
To study the mental and physical problems of single-parent families	AB	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The candidate made an attempt to explain briefly the purposes of the enquiry study and a related concept.</li> <li>● The enquiry topic was too broad. No justification was given for why the enquiry focus was placed on mental and physical problems. These problems were also minimally touched upon in the report.</li> <li>● The report was merely a presentation of facts and information about single-parent families and services for them, with little organisation.</li> <li>● Limited effort was made to gather relevant sources of information and analyse them in response to the enquiry questions. As a result, the enquiry was incoherent, shallow and with a narrow perspective.</li> <li>● Part D was too superficial and showed no evidence in support of the judgment and recommendations.</li> <li>● In general, the report was an example of a very low level of integrative analysis.</li> <li>● Some of the sources were not properly acknowledged (e.g. in Part C).</li> </ul>
	CD	1	
	PO	1	

**\*AB: Problem Definition and Identification of Concepts/Knowledge (Parts A & B)**

**CD: Explanation and Justification (Parts C & D)**

**PO: Presentation and Organisation (the whole report)**