

Research shows HK kids lack resilience

BY LOUISE HO AND TEDDY NG

Children in Hong Kong are less able to cope with adversity than their peers from Guangzhou and Beijing, a recent study has shown.

The research was conducted by the Boys & Girls Association of Hong Kong, the Center for Social Work Education and Research of Sun Yat-sen University and the College of Politics and Law of Capital Normal University.

In a test of the resilience of children from the three cities - where a low score equals high resilience - Hongkongers scored an average of 37.4 out of 75, worse than youngsters from Guangzhou (31.9) and Beijing (31.7), James Leung, assistant director of the Boys & Girls Association of Hong Kong, said.

Resilience encompasses such things as psychological management and rehabilitation when facing adversity, he said.

The study sampled more than 3,000 Grade 4, 6 and 7 students from the three cities between March and June.

A lack of resilience could affect children's growth in many different ways including their academic and social performances, Leung said.

The level of resilience is affected by factors such as mother-child relations, social values and emotional management, he said.

The research also found that fewer Hong Kong children agreed with the resilience indicators.

For example, 46.5 percent of them said they could "overcome difficulties when faced with them".

About 70 percent the youngsters from Guangzhou and Beijing agreed with the indicators.

As for why Hong Kong children are less resilient, Leung said: "In Hong Kong, parents and teachers are under greater pressure and spend less time with their children."

"This has affected their resilience," he said.

Adeline Chan, the principal coordinator of the early childhood and parenting education service of the Hong Kong Christian Service, said that in modern society parents take care of everything for their children including deciding what they should wear.

But there are no big societal differences between Hong Kong and the mainland, she said, because "mainland parents also think of what is best for their children".

At the family level, she said, parents should help develop children's problem-solving ability on a daily basis.

Also, she said, school curricula should include more classes on civil education.

The Christian Family Service Center's senior program director, Ng Kwok-tung, said the increasing number of working parents and cross-border marriages had affected Hong Kong children's development.

The number of cross-border marriages has increased from 2,600 in 1997 to 21,400 in 2006. Some children of these families live in Hong Kong, while their mothers stay on the mainland.