



Walking the demanding line of young motherhood: A Study on Young Mothers' Needs for Life and Career Development in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This is an exploratory study that investigates the experience and perceptions of young mothers in Hong Kong, aged 24 or below, regarding their life and career development. Adopting the mixed-methods design with a cross-sectional survey and focus groups, the study compares the data of 405 young mothers with 954 older mothers and reveals a central life concern of young mothers in fulfilling their maternal roles while searching for meaning in learning and working and juggling with various challenges in childrearing with their limited social support and resources. Preoccupied with fulfilling their maternal responsibilities and learning to take care of their children with inadequate social support and resources, these young mothers may focus their energy on mothering and place less emphasis on learning and working at this stage. The lack of flexible options in learning and vocational development have further reinforced their preoccupation with mothering and hindered their horizons and possibilities of actualizing other life roles of young mothers. The study sheds light on the importance of creating an enabling environment for young mothers in their life and career development with enhanced social support and resources and feasible options regarding formal and non-formal modes of learning and vocational training. The need of future programs that pay due attention to the meanings and concerns of young mothers and appreciate their unique challenges in striking a balance between their identities as mothers, learners and workers and integrating motherhood into their life and career development is also highlighted.

Keywords: young mother; motherhood; life and career development