

**To explore the relationship between dyslexia levels of children
and the stress of parenting**

An Undergraduate Honours Project/Thesis
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by
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Abstract

Different special learning needs (SEN) create varying impacts of challenges for the development of children and their families. The negative dyslexia influence on the children made parents feel challenging and stressful to guide their children. It brought tremendous pressure to learn and express themselves. Some parents pointed out that one of the sources of stress came from the misunderstanding and prejudice of family members, relatives and friends. Parents would like to provide them with more extracurricular learning and training to facilitate their children to become normal adaptive to live and learn with others. Curiously, parents' expectations become inconsistent with the needs and abilities of their children. As parents' expectations cannot be fulfilled, it made them harassed and stressed in parenting. Parental stress affected their physical condition and emotional health and badly influenced their parent-child relationship with weakened harmony of their family life. Therefore, the following study will seek to understand the impact of dyslexia on children, parents' expectations of children, parental stress and parents' self-esteem.

In short, this research project is a stepping stone to fill in the gaps in research and services related to dyslexic children and their parents' self-esteem to the parenting stress for the betterment of parents' mental health of dyslexic children.

List of Abbreviations

EDB	Bureau of Education
GPS	Global Positioning System
IFSC	Integrated Family Service Center
NGOs	Non-government Organization
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SWD	Department of Social Welfare

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the study

According to the definitions of the World Health Organization, disability is a descriptive term that encompasses activity limitations, barriers and restrictions to participation. In other words, the disability is a problem in the functioning of the body or presents difficulties in carrying out a task or a movement. (World Health Organization, 2016) In Hong Kong, government departments, such as the Census and Statistics Department or the Education Bureau, share the same concepts with the World Health Organization. Physical disability, mental illness, autism, specific learning disabilities (including dyslexia), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and intellectual disability are all recognized disabilities in Hong Kong. (The Census and Statistics Department, 2015) There is no doubt that the large number of people with disabilities imply various discussions in society regarding resources and social concerns. However, dyslexia are easily overlooked by the community compared to other types of disabilities.

This is a social bomb hidden in Hong Kong when we encounter the huge contradiction between the prevalence of dyslexia and the number of confirmed cases. The knowledge and understanding of dyslexia help parents assess and identify dyslexia,

essential for undiagnosed or hidden cases in preschool-age children. On the other hand, understanding dyslexia in the educational system and the public can avoid unnecessary criticism of the "abnormal" label and inappropriate response to dyslexia children and their parents. Understanding the unique situation and impacts to the dyslexia child is important to the parents identify and revise the expectation that can be effective and appropriate for children with dyslexia earlier. Only understanding children's learning problems with a proper educational plan and social services support to the family can help them be adaptive to and overcome the difficulties caused by dyslexia and related life challenges.

1.2 Background information

1.2.1 Definitions of factors

This study determined the influence of parents' self-esteem on the level of parenting stress through two factors: the negative impact of dyslexia on their children and the parent's expectations of their children. Therefore, dyslexia child, parents, expectations, stress level, and self-esteem were defined.

- **Dyslexia Child**

The Convention on the Rights of Children stated a child is an individual under the age

of eighteen and according to laws related to children. (United Nations Convention, 2010) Scholars proved that dyslexia is the most common S.E.N. for about 85% and above. (Masover, 1999) In addition, DSM-V claimed dyslexia is not general educational difficulties such as intellectual disability or developmental delay but the influence of external factors, such as major neurological diseases. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) However, the earliest diagnosed dyslexia is aged six that children are in primary school based on children's developmental milestones. Related evaluations are only evaluated by registered educational psychologists or clinical psychologists on the list who can make descriptions and recommendations. (Chan, Ho, Tsang, Lee & Chung, 2007)

In 2002, the International Dyslexia Association (I.D.A.) defined dyslexia as a specific learning disorder based on neurobiology. The characters cannot recognize words accurately and fluently and have poor spelling and decoding capabilities. Defects in speech processing usually cause these difficulties. Other cognitive abilities of dyslexia children are the same as ordinary people. However, dyslexia will affect their poor reading comprehension and lack of reading experience, which hinders the development of vocabulary and background knowledge. These will directly affect the child's learning achievement and confidence.

- Child-Parents

According to Chapter 596 Hong Kong Domicile Ordinance Section 2 and Chapter 429 of the Parent and Child Ordinance of the law of Hong Kong, Parents refers to the child's biological, adopted or step-parent. (Department of Justice, 2009) Family caregivers in the family system who aim to take care of the child's daily life can also be used to explain children's parents.

- Expectation

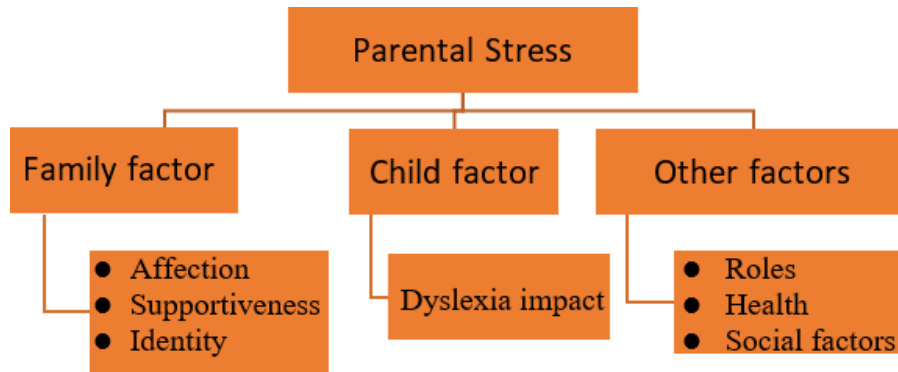
Expectation refers to a standard that people outline for something in advance and hope to reach or fulfil the expected value. Some scholars defined parental expectations refer to the expectations and evaluations that parents place on their children's performance and future development based on their children's images in their minds and the daily interactive experiences. In this study, academic performance and personal achievement will be explored under the parents' expectations. According to the study, the parent-child relationship being a mediator in the relationship which moderating by students' learning motivation directly influence on reading ability. (Chen, Q., Kong, Y., Gao, W., & Mo, L. ,2018). Parents' high expectations will hinder their children's growth and arrange something they do not know when to have, like participating in many tutorials class. It further leads to failure and disappointment for both children and parents. The

emergence of sorrow and unhealthy lifestyles become a by-product of over-expectation among these families.

- Parental Stress Level

Abidin's theory points out that parenting stress is defined by parent factors, children, and objective factors. Parents factors include parental affection, support and identity. Children's factors include acceptability, wants, feeling, interaction, and strengthening parents. At the same time, objective factors such as role restrictions, health, and society are clarified. (Abidin, 1995) In this study, the parent factors will be analyzed, and the factor of spouses will be defined as the family factor (Figure 1.1). Four catalogues related to parental stress are namely: children's characteristics and children's learning problems, inequality in daily responsibilities and the role of mothers, educators' power and control, social comparison, and the promotion of blame culture. (T. M. Simon Chan, 2021) The parental stress level affects the parental behaviours when getting along with their children. So, parents fail to grasp the methods of stress reduction. The parent-child relationship will have a negative impact.

Figure 1.2.1 Factors of Parental Stress



- Self-esteem

Self-esteem is the awareness of positivity possessed by oneself and the level of global self-cognition that one has for oneself as a person (Campbell, 1985). Self-esteem reflects how much a person respects oneself. It is a subjective judgment which self chooses. A person with high self-esteem will still know how to respect himself/ herself and will not see his/ her own value due to external influences even if the process or outcome is unsatisfactory. Besides that, a person with low self-esteem will negatively evaluate themselves with misunderstanding of lack of personal strengths.

1.2.2 Dyslexia to human life

Most children can learn to read under normal educational conditions. Due to various reasons, some children's reading levels cannot be ascended to become proficient readers. Dyslexia is a developmental disorder of brain-based impairs which affects people's reading ability. (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke,

2016). Generally, people whose reading ability is below the average age group level can be regarded as having reading difficulties. According to Child Assessment Service pointed out the international reported figures shown one in every ten children has dyslexia, but their severity varies from person to person.

The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM- V) stated that the prevalence of specific learning disorders is between 5% and 10%. At the same time, the DSM-V also declared that specific learning disabilities are an alternate term for dyslexia. At the same time, DSM-V also stated that specific learning disabilities are an alternative term for dyslexia. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) Students with dyslexia often have academic learning difficulties such as writing, pronunciation and spelling. At the same time, the research also proved that people with dyslexia often spend more time and face challenges when learning second language skills. (International Dyslexia Association, 2016) Obviously, dyslexia is known as a disability for success in the academic field and affects the career path of people with dyslexia. The effects of dyslexia can be reflected in different parts of one's life. Judging from the results of dyslexia and the general prevalence, it is an inevitable and universal problem in modern human society that will significantly impact the social system.

Dyslexia in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, approximately 9.7% to 12.6% of schoolchildren suffer from dyslexia.

About 70% of them are mild, 20% are moderate, and the remaining 10% are severe.

(康翠萍,2017) People diagnosed with dyslexia usually suffer throughout the primary and secondary schools until the adult stage for their whole life. People with dyslexia have difficulties in word recognition, understanding of words, and dictation. Some of them have family inheritance and irreversibility.

1.3 Problem formulation

Dyslexia affects personal visual and language processing and causes emotional problems (Campbell, 2004). Children with dyslexia cannot be aware in time will hardly return to improve their reading and writing skills and even cause some psychological and behavioural problems. They may become a burden on the family and society when they grow up. 50% of teenagers who commit crimes have dyslexia. More than 80% of the children have dyslexia or ADHD and other obstacles drop out of school and internet addiction. Only 8% of the study participants with dyslexia can complete university studies. (康翠萍,2017)

The impacts of dyslexia on everyone are different depending on the severity of the situation. In some under treatment, guidance may be practical for dyslexia children,

but some are not. As mentioned above, dyslexia is a lifelong problem and affects every growth stage of people. The learning stage becomes the most challenging period for dyslexia children and their parents. According to the Hong Kong Special Learning Disability Association research, 70% of parent support hotline users recognize that their children's learning burden and lack of knowledge and emotional support make them feel stressed about the future. (Hong Kong Special Learning Disability Association, 2016) Another study found that parents in an overloaded environment, often confronting children's negative behaviours, will have a higher stress level. The government, non-governmental organizations and communities need to recognize the needs and difficulties of students with dyslexia and their parents, especially the risks of mental health problems surrounding families with dyslexia. These parents are more likely to abuse children. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research and seek more appropriate treatment methods (Nixon, Sweeney, Erickson & Touyz, 2003).

1.4 Research objectives and research questions

The study aims to explore the relationship between the impacts of dyslexia on children and the parenting stress of parents and the implications on social services. Objectives of the Study include the essential factors as follows:

- To study the impact of dyslexia on children and parents' expectations of children to analyze the relationship between parents' stress levels and personal self-esteem.
- Explore the demand for support services for parents with dyslexia children in society.

The following questions asked as a thematic interview guide of study (Appendix 1):

- (a) Would the dyslexia influence to the child's daily life and study that make parent feel stressful?
- (b) Would higher parental stress levels be induced by the un-fulfilment of parents' expectations of the dyslexia child?
- (c) Would the fulfilment of parents' expectations maintain the higher self-esteem of parenting?
- (d) Would the high self-esteem of parenting a dyslexia child reduce the parental stress level?

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of previous studies and literature

Some scholars claim that parents of a dyslexia child have higher pain and stress levels than parents of children with non-dyslexia. On the other hand, scholars also proved that children with dyslexia have lower academic performance and interpersonal self-esteem than their parents may also face. (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia, & Suardi, 2015)

Under the influence of Hong Kong's knowledge-based economy system, the comparison of academic performance cause stress to the students and parents. In 2014, St. James Settlement of Hong Kong conducted study on parental stress for children with special learning needs, 12% of the participants achieved the highest stress score (10/10), and 41% reached 8 (8/10). In addition, the Special Learning Interests Association conducts research on the stress level of parents with special learning needs. The report stated that 51.2% of participants reached severe stress levels. (Special Learning Interests Association, 2016) Another study also proved that children with dyslexia experience more social anxiety in the interaction between school and home environment than children without dyslexia. (Mammarella, Ghisi, Bomba, Bottesi, Caviola, Broggi and Nacinovich, 2014) These studies show a close relationship between the stress level of family caregivers and their interrelationships with children with SEN. Natale's studies have used attribution theory (Weiner, 1985,

1986, 1992) to identify parents and the conceptual framework of how parents interpret and evaluate children's academic performance. (Natale, 2009) It may be related to how parents' expectations and self-esteem influence the parents' stress level.

Dyslexia is usually a "hidden disability" since the difference between intelligence and reading and writing performance (Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2005). Even though there are some studies on children's reading skills and reading problems, just several are known about others' views on early childhood reading development and how children think about their learning experience after school (Natale et al., 2009). According to research conducted by a child assessment service consultant, Dr Catherine Lam, many parents and even professionals such as teachers, social workers, or doctors lack the awareness and knowledge to recognize students with dyslexia, which delays the evaluation or diagnosis of students with dyslexia. (Catherine Lam, 2001) Most overseas research focuses on specific learning disabilities and dyslexia. However, many kinds of learning disabilities, like the need for spelling and dyscalculia, is ignored. The imperfect development of the identification, support and adjustment system for students with dyslexia has made dyslexia an invisible disability and created more family and social problems for Hong Kong.

Valle and Aponte (2002) stated that parents do not understand the professionals' professional or technical terms make them feel discriminated against in an unequal position. In 2002, Taunt and Hastings emphasized that negative parent-teacher relationships will reduce parents' confidence and self-esteem. In Korea, Lim found that Korean parents are influenced by a culture that emphasizes the importance of academic performance. (Lim, 2007) Among parents in Chinese culture, Ren and Edwards (2015) investigated the relationship between Chinese parents' expectations for developing their children's social-emotional skills and the social and cultural interpretation of parental pressure in Chinese parenting styles and their children's social skills. The results show that the parenting styles can adjust the parents' expectations, affecting children's social skills.

Some scholars pointed out that parents' emotional distress is closely related to the consequences of dealing with dyslexia children. (Maughan, 1995) Other study showed that the parents of dyslexia children with extraordinary parental stress. (Antshel & Joseph, 2006) Karande and Kuril also investigated the parenting practices of parents having a child with newly diagnosed specific learning disability and to analyse the impact on the parent-child relationships. Heyman (2000) pointed out that a healthy and stable social relationship between children with dyslexia and their relatives helps them maintain a high level of self-esteem (Shehu, A., Zhilla, E. &

Dervishi, E. 2015). That means the higher the involvement of parents in parenting practices, the higher their scores in interpersonal relationships. (Karande & Kuril, 2011) However, many families in Hong Kong include dual-career parents. Parents do not have time to deal with the root causes or systematic training and counselling on their children's learning problems. (Committee on Family and School Cooperation, 2003)

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Bowen's Family system theory

According to Bowen's Family system theory, different systems interact and affect each other. (Bowen, 1977) Therefore, the reactions or changes of any member in the family system will trigger other members' corresponding actions and changes.

2.2.2 Abidin's Parenting Stress Theory

Abidin's theory said that the stress level of parenting is determined by the factors of parents factors, children factors and objective factors (including society). According to the research of Simon Chan and Kitty Mo, parents often face much comparative social pressure in parenting because their friends and relatives tend to compare their

children's academic performance. (T. M. Simon Chan & Y. H. Kitty Mo, 2021) The Abidin Parenting Index (P.S.I.), which is widely used to measure and assess parents' stress levels, reflects that the characteristics of children are one of the three main reasons for parental stress. (Abidin, 1995) A survey on parents' stress levels of children with generalized developmental disabilities found that children's behavioural and developmental problems harm parents' stress levels. (Davis and Carter, 2008) In addition, Baker and McCal (1995) compared the parental stress levels of parents of children with learning disabilities and a control sample. The results showed that the more significant the negative impact of the child's S.E.N., the higher the parents' stress. It can be inferred from this that the greater the effect of children's dyslexia, the higher the stress level on parents. It shows the value and demand of this research because of few studies on children and families with dyslexia.

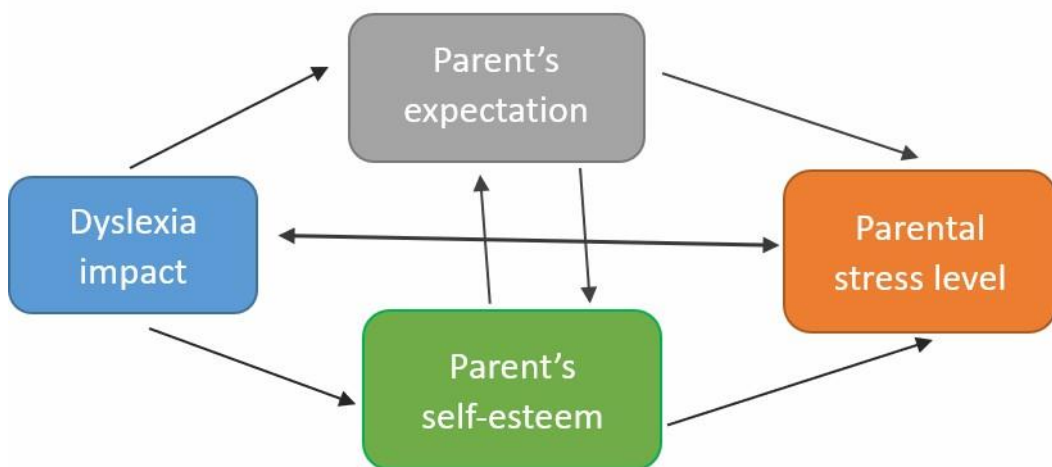
2.2.3 *Terror Management Theory of Self-esteem*

Terror management theory proposes that self-esteem is a sense of subjective identification that oneself is meaningfully regarded as the main value object in the universe. (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991b) Self-esteem is the awareness of a positive attitude towards oneself and a person's overall self-recognition level of oneself as a person. People usually maintain their self-esteem by believing in cultural

worldviews and complying with the standards stipulated by that worldview. In social discourse, the criteria for "good" parents include educating their children. Under the knowledge-based economy system in Hong Kong, children's academic performance has become an indicator of whether their parents are competent.

As a conclude of the above literatures, the relationship between negative dyslexia impacts, parent's expectations, self-esteem and parental stress level which are interacting to each other (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework of the study



CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

3.1.1 Qualitative study by conversation analysis

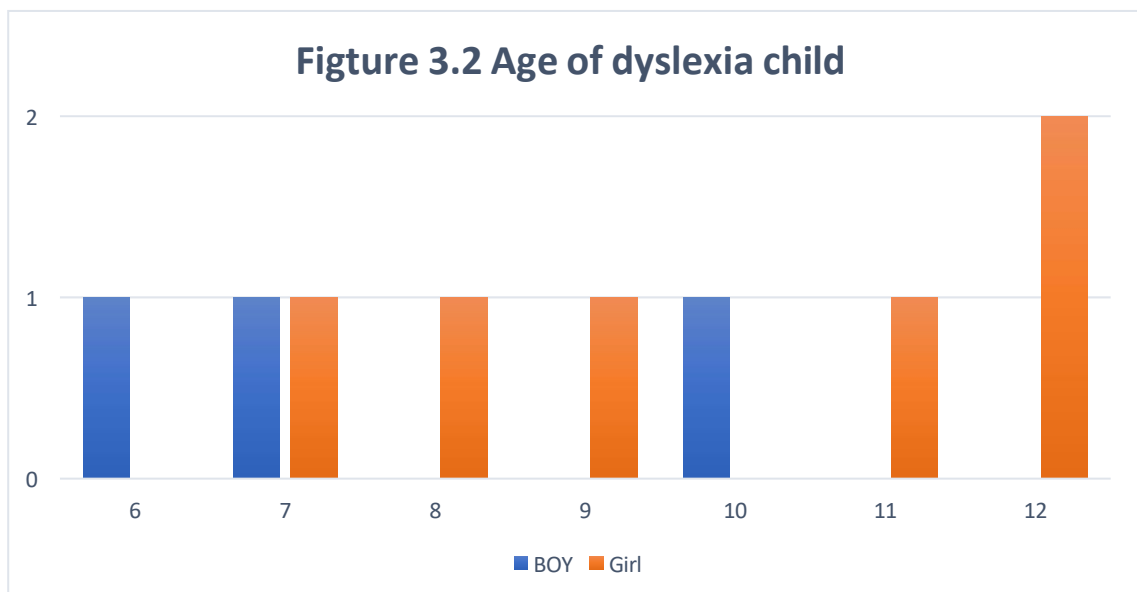
This research listed and analyzed the parents' options utilizing interviews through the textual analysis to understand the effects of parental stress on parents facing dyslexia in varying degrees through the detailed analysis of dialogues and stories. The particular culture (parent's expectations), particular social group (parents with dyslexia child), or phenomenon (parents' self-esteem and parental stress) can be analyzed through the interview conversations and stories. According to Vanderstoep & Johnston, the conversation analysis by the naturally occurring conversation of the interviews was applied in this research. (W. Vanderstoep & D. Johnston, 2009).

Thus, the study explored the structure of the dialogue and the function of specific words by analyzed the terms and non-verbal communication and behaviours of the interactive dialogue content that occurs naturally with the parents. At the same time, conversation analysis used to analyze the unique personal experience that parents are telling through natural storytelling to explore the impact of children's dyslexia on the parent-child relationship, parental expectations, parents' stress, and self-esteem.

3.2 Target informants and sampling

Three male and three female parents of dyslexia child 6-12 years old was interviewed due to the current practice that the age of 6 is the earliest diagnosed and the education of children aged 6 to 12 is more dependent on the guidance of parents.

Informants	Sex	Number of child with dyslexia	Age and gender of dyslexia child:
M1	Female	1	7/ Boy
M2	Female	2	6 / Boy, 12/Girl
M3	Female	1	9/ Girl
F1	Male	2	7/Girl, 12/Girl
F2	Male	2	9/ Girl , 11/ Girl
F3	Male	1	10/ Boy



3.3 Data collection

Since the family roles become blurry, the informants are no gender limited to get more views and to ensure the questions were relevant and appropriate to their situation. Thus, each interview was last for around 30 to 60 minutes in Chinese by the internet platform or telephone.

3.4 Date analysis

The data was analyzed through the themes in the text of dialogues from the informants.

3.5 Confidentiality and ethical issues

The researcher ensured confidentiality and obtained the informed written consent of the participants. Participants can withdraw from the interview at any time during the process. An information sheet designed to know what they have agreed. According the situation of COVID-19, they chose the location of the interview. The real names of Informants were replaced by code names to protect the personal privacy of Informants. The audio-recorded was deleted after recorded in the scripts. Also, the subject of the honours project had the approval of the college's Ethics Committee.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS/ FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Negative dyslexia Impact

The impact of dyslexia on an individual is different depending on the severity and complexity. As mentioned earlier, dyslexia is a lifelong problem that can affect different stages in a person. The learning stage is the most difficult period for students with dyslexia and their parents. Dyslexia influences children's daily life and learning situations at different levels. Local research shows that examinations are the largest source of stress for parents with more than 70% of parents feeling stressed in this regard. The second-largest source of stress is disciplining their children's misconduct which accounts for 66.1%. The following is about parents dealing with their children's emotions with 63.8% (The Church of United Brethren in Christ Social Service Division, 2010). The informants in this study told that the multi-SEN has more negative influences on their children. Parents need to spend more time and effort to handle and more stress that comes with it.

As the following quotes from the research:

"Sometimes dyslexia make it difficult for him to express his thoughts and feelings smoothly. When we cannot understand what he talking about, it makes him feel irritable. The negative emotions will come beside and loses his temper. He will cry and yell when he loses his temper." - Informant M1 (4)

"Actually, she has difficulties with attention deficit. Apart from attention deficit, I haven't been able to test the impacts of dyslexia on her. When I asked if she had word skipping or not, she can't answer me. It was affected by the other learning difficulties of speech delay. She was diagnosed in Child Assessment Centre when she studied in kindergarten."-Informant M3(14)

The multi-SEN condition such as the mixing kind of attention deficit and speech delay makes dyslexic children have more impact on speech expression, comprehension, organization, social and emotional management which greatly increases the difficulty of parental discipline and communication. Parents need to spend more time and effort to handle and more stress that comes with it.

4.2 Parent's expectations

Children adapt to others' expectations by acting in a way of physical growth, academic performance, and achievement in different areas that brings pride and honor to their family, relatives, school, etc. Some research participants indicated that adjusting expectations to the child's condition can reduce feelings of disappointment. The higher adaptation and achievement towards parents' reasonable expectations can reduce parental stress. The overload and higher expectations of parents to their children not only hinder their growth but also cause the parent-child relationship worse since the child may be arranged to do something they hate such as participating in tutorials after school.

"It is more likely to be disappointed if I have over-expectation on my son. No doubt that it will affect my emotions. I will easier lose my temper and blame him.

We may not control our negative emotions and vent to each other. It is useless to make him learn from it. He will not learn it suddenly. I can't deny that parents' expectations and behaviour even our words are so influential to children." - Informant F3(23)

"Actually, as parents adjust our expectations for our children and lower our expectations according to their abilities. Moreover, don't compare the children to others will be better! Parents always feel that they are not well parenting and children usually underperforming. If our expectations are adjusted to be reasonable based on the child's abilities, there is less stress. It is always easier for children to meet the standards expected and the chance of disappointment to the parents become less." - Informant M1(18)

They shared that the education system in Hong Kong requires the unstopped progress on academic performance of students. It makes their children with dyslexia and their parents under enormous stress. The assessments like Territory-wide System Assessment and Diploma of Secondary Education unkindness toward dyslexic children further contributes to frustration and disappointment for both children and parents. It means an unhappy and unhealthy lifestyle (such as lack of rest) as a by-product.

"His writing fails to meet the school's requirements so he was often criticized by teachers and needs to be corrected. I often accompany him to do homework until midnight which causes him to lack sleep and can't concentrate on the lessons. I'm worried that he can't catch up on the course progress when he goes to primary two and three. His reading comprehensions and dictations become more and more.

Besides, his communication and expression skills are not good. He can't express it smoothly. It is not only challenging to the academic examinations like oral in the future but also easier to be misunderstood by peers and fail to make friends in school."-Informant M1(11)

"Due to dyslexia, it is very hard to get along with my daughter when I teach her to complete the homework parallel to the Hong Kong education system. A lot of corrections; the marked cross signs received from the school teacher; deduct points and even receiving teachers' calls about my daughter's dyslexia make us under stress. These are not only hard and stressful for my daughter but also bother us. There is too much information about it." -Informant F1(15)

4.3 Parent's self-esteem

Scholars proved children with dyslexia have lower academic performance and interpersonal self-esteem. Parents of a dyslexic child may also have low self-esteem of parenting due to lack of knowledge or skills. (Bonifacci, Storti, Tobia, & Suardi, 2015). Some research participants told the negative impact of dyslexia on children's understanding, organization and expression, and it caused children's learning and social relationship obstacles. It ascends parental stress.

"Sometimes he can't understand the meaning of others, and it makes him easier to cause misunderstandings due to his dyslexia difficulties. In addition, his expression is not so friendly and his words are not expressive. It is more likely to cause conflicts with others." -Informant F3(4)

"Yes. The picture just shown is the experience of my daughter's entire primary school life last year. What I want to express is my daughter's situation. She can't

... speak out and speechless expression. She is a person without a mouth shown in the picture. It is so helpless. She is too young to understand what others feel and tell so how I can express myself?" - Informant M3(57)

The results of the study coincide with the findings which suggested that dyslexic children experienced more social anxiety than non-dyslexic children in the interaction of school and home environment (Mammarella, Ghisi and Bomba, et.al, 2014). The research participants pointed out that the ideas closely related to the conceptual framework of the study on how parents interpret and evaluate children's academic performance is related to parental expectations and parental self-esteem and affects parental stress levels. Therefore, when parents optimize their understanding and acceptance of their child's situation, they would look for more resources (like knowledge, skills and services) to support and discipline their children. Satisfaction and confidence in the effectiveness of child discipline can help parents have higher self-esteem, thereby reducing the stress of discipline.

"Ai! This is a big problem that every subject is a C grade. My bottom line still wanted her to get into the worst one in Band 1 at that time. The last one in Band 1 secondary school teach in English was my bottom line. I've always had a bottom line with my kids. However, the situation let me start to think it didn't seem ideal."
-Informant M2(34)

"My daughter hasn't a problem, it's something she was born with that made her not perfect. We can adjust fall back and get to the 70 points as the target since

we didn't get to 80 to 90. Achieve a score of 70 is already an A grade for my daughter. This is what I told her. In the third exam, I told my daughter again and we got a 70. It is a great job that she put some effort.” -Informant M3 (83)

Self-esteem is the awareness of positivity possessed by oneself and the level of global self-cognition that one has for oneself as a person (Campbell, 1984). It is important for parents to renewed the self-evaluate of parenting and understanding of their identity as mothers/fathers. They will not see his/ her own value due to external influences even if the process or outcome is unsatisfactory to the standard of school. They have high self-esteem and know how to respect himself/ herself with understanding of personal strengths.

4.4 Parental Stress

According to Abidin's theory, the level of parenting stress is determined by the family factors of parents and spouses, children's factors and other factors (including roles, health and social).

4.4.1 Family factors

More support from family factors, the less the stress. The social discourse of "Children's mistake is the parents' duty" putting a lot of stress on the parents by The children's behaviours as performance the role of parents in education. Some mothers have been blamed by husbands and relatives for disciplining their children. These will directly affect their self-evaluation of parenting. The research shows that the more

affection, support and identity from parents and spouses make the higher the self-esteem and the less the relative stress.

"Her teachers, classmates and even the elders in our family will ask her to put more effort unconsciously. I usually chat with my daughter to deal with her emotions and stress related to this issue. In this regard, it will make me feel stressful. "-Informant F1(6)

"One time my husband said 'You don't know how to teach him so you should pay someone else to teach'. Honestly, my son's ability is indeed weaker than his peers and he has some difficulties with speech but I don't agree with his father's comments. It is useless to my son. Relatives and friends will only notice that my son's stumbles and always remind me to take care of him carefully. Sometimes they talk with my son but he can't understand, they made the judgment that the son's ability weak because the mother's education failed!" - Informant M1 (20)

Relatives are a relationship that cannot be avoided. In the past, Chinese society attached great importance to kinship relations and regarded as an indispensable support system. Nowadays, emphasizing the independence of nuclear family and the kind of concern, contribute or impede by relatives is likely to be regarded as a great stress. According to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the satisfaction of love and belonging is one of the most basic human needs (Maslow, A. H.,1954). The primary function of the family provides family members with loving and emotional support which the couple in a family is an important provider of each other. In Hong

Kong families, there are still role stereotypes in which males are breadmaker and females are caregivers. It is easier to blame mothers for the child's growth problems. Poor communication between couples or troubles in emotional expression lead to mutual inability to understand, recognize and support each other. It makes the adaptability of the family's daily life (including handling the problem of parenting dyslexia child) and family cohesion.

4.4.2 Child factors

The 2010 survey report of the Church of United Brethren in Christ Social Service Division in Hong Kong pointed out that children with special learning needs are prone to emotional and social problems. Parents need to spend more patience on parenting. The research participants said that the less affected factors such as children's personality, emotional problems and self-care ability, the parental stress become less.

"My son is impatient. He doesn't want to listen when I explain how and why the text is written. He pushes away and does the exercises in his way before my explanations." - Informant M2(17) (personality)

"Her positive and negative emotions come and go suddenly. She seems like nothing happened and is suddenly sad and angry. It makes me feel annoyed and nervous. I need to estimate her emotional status and dealing with it is very difficult which takes time and think a lot." - Informant F2(9) (emotional)

"She is already a secondary one student. I and my wife decided to let her be independent and try to arrange for her to go back by herself after school. Since she is a girl, we are still worried about her safety. My daughter's phone is equipped with a GPS function. Once my daughter contacted me and said got lost. I used GPS to find her and pick her up. According this, I went to school with her in a different way and let her read and explain to her about the different street signs." - Informant F1(2) (self-care)

F1 maintain the strength and quality of caring for his daughter. F1 balances the safety, the developmental need of independent, problem-solving and the self-esteem of his daughter through companionship, guidance and encouragement. The practical wisdom and achievement enhances his self-esteem as parent.

4.4.3 Other factors

Living in a culture of society insisting on comparison and competition, friends and relatives tend to enable the parents to compare children's academic performance, and the stress on parents to compare results in different negative emotions including escape, helplessness and shame. A local study reported that 55% of parents felt stressed by teachers' negative comments which were 20% more than the average (Christian Association Foundation Social Services, 2010). The informants said that relevant professionals including teachers and Educational and Child Psychologist's opinions and attitudes about children's needs were understood, evaluated and

supported can reduce parents' stress.

"Usually comparison with children's academic performance! My cousin's child is the same age as my youngest daughter. They often compare two children and ask why studying is so hard for my daughter. They asked me to arrange more and more tutorials for her and said it is useful to their child. In fact, everyone is different so how can you compare. Sad be the truth, I can't control what others said. I can only avoid it." - Informant F2(17)

"Talking about teachers makes me angrier. Today, most of the teachers only criticize children for not paying attention or forcing them to memorize. They criticize children for not understanding the text and what other people say because they do not put effort. As parents, we know that her dyslexia affect her and it is so common." -Informant F1(21)

4.5 Self-emotional awareness of parents

The research found that some parents neglect their emotional needs when caring for a dyslexic child. Family and community support networks can help to reduce their anxiety. Parents knowing how to seek help can boost self-esteem and reduce the stress of parenting. Some scholars have shown that parents in overloaded environments (such as frequently confrontation with children's negative behaviours) have higher stress levels. These parents are more likely to abuse their children (Nixon, Sweeney, Erickson & Touyz, 2003).

"The government is so far away from us now. I want to tell you, I really think the government is so far away! Every time I seek help, I will find a private company

or organization. The government only arranges for the hospital to follow up once a month only for my daughter's speech delay problem. Is it effective?" - Informant M3(101)

"That's why I try very hard to find suitable learning platforms for my daughter. She can acquire knowledge and skills without being influenced by traditional learning modes and methods. This is also a consideration when we look for places to migrate. It's not just political reasons or social atmosphere. More important is my target country's education system having more systematic support for dyslexia. I hope that my daughter will find her learning path in an environment with respect. I want she can live a more confident life." - Informant t F1 (23)

A parent's emotional distress is closely related to the consequences of parenting with specific learning disabilities child (Maughan, 1995). The negative impact on the self-esteem of individuals with dyslexia may depend on the level of family support. Scholars have pointed out that healthy and stable social relationships that children establish with their relatives help them maintain high self-esteem (Shehu, Zhilla & Dervishi, 2015). The research participants indicated that their emotions and behaviour had profound impact on their children. Therefore, parents need to be concerned about the impact of stress on emotional and mental health. This is inseparable from the establishment of a good parent-child relationship to maintain family harmony advocated by the Hong Kong government.

"I blamed loudly the younger daughter once because of anger. The younger

daughter kept crying. The eldest daughter immediately hugged her sister and cried together until they were out of breath. I lost control of my emotions and broke the television with my hands. It scared the two sisters. Nowadays, I still regret it." -Informant F2(18)

"Actually, it is necessary to accept that children with dyslexia cannot achieve satisfactory academic performance in mainstream schools. We need to find the children's strengths. Otherwise, the parent-child relationship will easily become tenser and tenser because of focusing on her bad academic performance and keep blaming her. I see my daughter crying every day after school. Children have a lot of stress at school and home because of their expectation on grades." - Informant F1(5)

The emotional and mental well-being of parents is very important. Since the interaction between family member under Bowen's Family system theory, parents' negative emotions and expression (such as the speak tone, attitude, facial expressions and behaviors) will affect their children. Parents may not know how much the inner setbacks that a roar may bring to their children but it directly affects the parent-child relationship. Hence, parents should aware and learn to control their emotions in the process of parent-child communication.

4.6 Social support

With different influences and situations of dyslexia on children, parents need to spend more time understanding and accepting their children's uniqueness and learning

problems to formulate effective and appropriate educational plans for children to help them adapt and overcome the embarrassment of dyslexia. However, it is a daunting task for dual-career parents to dedicate time to engaging with their dyslexic children in Hong Kong's unique economic and social environment. A survey in 2017 conducted by Caritas Hong Kong showed that more than 70% of parents with special learning difficulties child felt that community support was insufficient. (Caritas Hong Kong, 2017) This study once again proved that the existing support systems for dyslexia still have many shortcomings.

"Doesn't everyone have a parent like me who can give up all their belongings to accompany a child? People need to work for lives!" - Informant M3(68)

"I'm looking for a way through different channels. No one cares and no one help. Many parents are still waiting for government services for more than three years. Children don't know whether they have been diagnosed with SEN until primary five or six. Others have already planned to find suitable secondary schools for children and plan their future. Please! The government should do something! It's really hard for parents!" -Informant M3(70)

"In fact, I can define as deliberately not going out to work and staying at home to take care and educate them. I need to figure out how to find suitable ways to help them. It takes a lot of time to participate in different lectures and activities to understand since the information of SEN is many and messy."-Informant M2(49)

The research participants said that the information of dyslexia is sufficient but

messy. They need to spend a lot of time searching the suitable information and resources. Some of them gave up their job and interest even their rest to take care of their child. Under the situation of COVID-19, the online training or consultation is useful to the parents. Hence, the government's support for dyslexic children (including the recognition of NGO child psychologists' assessment to shorten the waiting time, financial support, the establishment of relevant resource banks and community education) is important and urgent to support them especially the dual-parent families.

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

5.1 Contribution of the study

5.1.1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

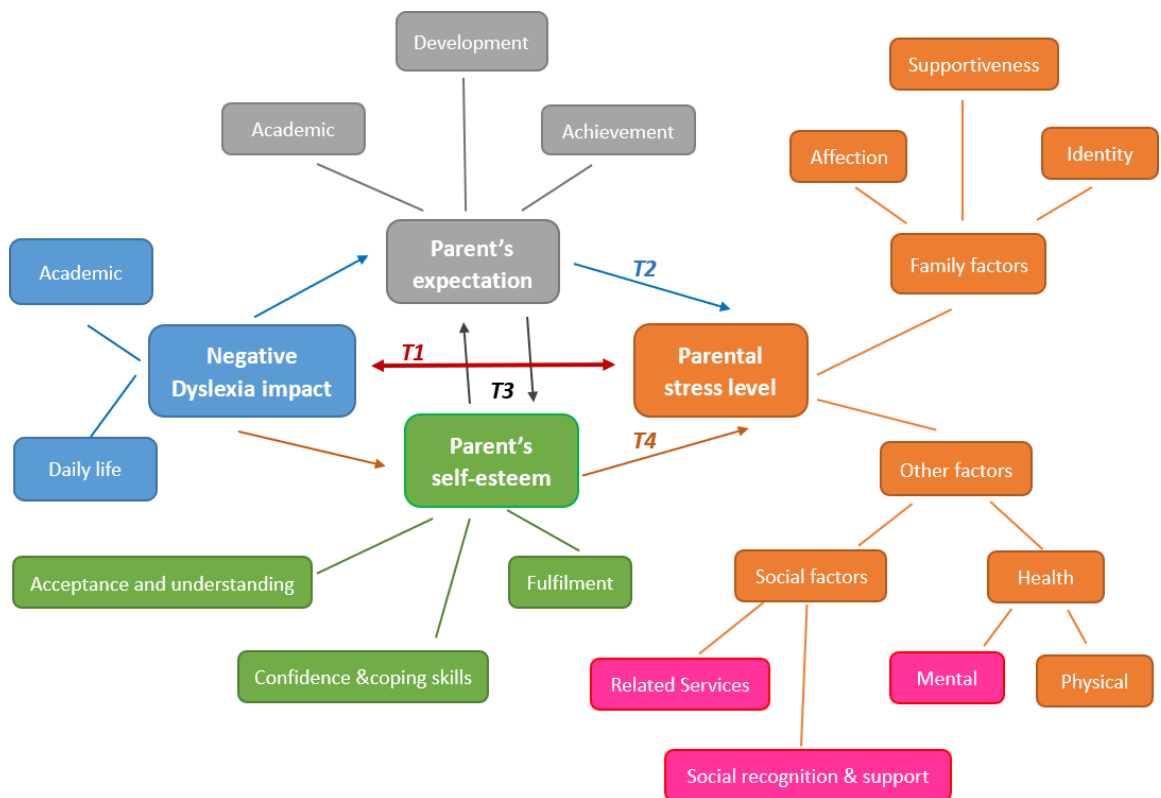
According to Bowen's Family system theory (Bowen, 1977), the most basic emotional system is the nuclear family. The nuclear family affects a person's growth from childhood to adulthood and members are strongly emotionally connected. Anything that happens to one of the members also affects the push and pull of alienation and closeness between the other members. Therefore, parents' behavior and emotional expression have an important impact on dyslexia children's character formation, interaction and communication between family members, and inheritance. The concept of the Nuclear Family Emotional Process illustrates that the higher the degree of nuclear family integration, the greater the potential crisis of anxiety and instability and the more inclined to fight, maintain distance, compromise or sacrifice a member. Directly affects parents' expectations, self-esteem, stress level, and even family harmony.

Abidin's theory explains the constructs and causes of parental stress and proposed three main aspects of parental stress. One of them is child characteristics including intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, medical illness, and behavioral health problems. Moreover, Baker and McCal (1995) compared levels of parental stress of parents with children. Results suggested that the greater the pathology of a child, the greater the parental stress. It is the same as these research findings that the mixed dyslexia difficulties make more negative impacts on the child and parents' stress levels higher.

Self-esteem is a sense of subjective identification that which one is meaningfully

regarded the value of oneself. (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991b) According to the findings, dyslexia children face more academic difficulties, parents are more likely to have lower levels of self-esteem and making them feel self-blame or even anxious. The resilience for coping and managing is an essential factor for the parents to enhance their self-esteem. Terror management theory points explicitly out that self-esteem is the core psychological mechanism protecting individuals from anxiety and realizing their vulnerability. (Greenberg et al., 1992) It is what parents with dyslexia child need to reduce parental stress and maintain their mental health. It is even more indispensable for establishing a good parent-child relationship.

Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework after the study



5.1.2 Practical level

To a large extent, the study showed a new direction and provided a stepping stone to the development of the social work profession in Hong Kong serving families with

dyslexic children. The situation of the family with dyslexia children has not improved much over the past twenty years, although there are growing number of services provided by NGOs and the government. Hence, the current professional training should be strengthened in context to respond the needs of society precisely. Moreover, the strengthening services do not only focus on school but also the units of family services, youth services and even community services. It should provide more practical information and counselling services for the dyslexic child and their parents.

Similarly, the study also highlights the service gap between the educational sector, social work sector and medical profession. Today, the intervention strategy of NGOs and the government sector can be described as early intervention and therapeutic intervention. However, it lacks efficiency and continuity. Therefore, optimization of the intervention strategy is a necessary element to solve dyslexia problems in Hong Kong. An integrated service to SEN clients can be an effective solution. In addition, based on the concept of integrated services to the SEN students, a database about them should be created which constructed a better referral and support system.

Macro level, the study also provides the essential evidence of necessity of deeper advocacy and more public education in Hong Kong. The social educations are not only promoting the understanding of dyslexia in society but also awareness of the

parental pressure and mental health of the parents. Moreover, the government facilitate policy reform such as setup special education legislation or striving for more resources input.

5.2 Implications to social work practice

Parents have to be aware and have a basic understanding of dyslexia. Indeed, the findings of this research were a valuable exploratory study of the stress level and self-esteem needs of parents of dyslexic children to cope with difficulties in the daily in Hong Kong. According to the study, the influence of dyslexia on the children and parents' self-esteem the parenting stress have an interactive relationship. In other words, caring for children with dyslexia in Hong Kong can be a huge strain for these parents. Therefore, this study is able to inform the improvement of the family services on the parents' mental health of dyslexic children. Also, it is a timely warning to society and relevant organizations and government departments like t h e Integrated Family Service Center, Bureau of Education and Department of Social Welfare. The results may be the catalyst for raising awareness of the crisis of different professionals and governments toward the dyslexic family.

The study showed that the parent's expectations and self-esteem have a mediating effect on the negative influence of a dyslexia child and the parent's stress

level. The research result can shed light on how to fill up the research gap on local dyslexia in Hong Kong and facilitate the future development of emotional support services to the family in need.

To compare with the framework constructed before, the relationship between negative dyslexia impacts, parent's expectations, self-esteem and stress are interacting with each other same as the literature review before and the discovery as the following figure shown (Figure 5.2). The research discovered that social recognition and support are meaningful to the parents to maintain self-esteem and reduce stress while parenting. It also the parents' mental health is an important factor of parent stress which has a direct relationship to the parent-child relationship impact the family harmony.

Figure 5.2 Discovery after research

			Low Parent's self-esteem	High Parent's self-esteem
Negative Dyslexia impact	→	High un-fulfillment of Parent's expectation	Parental stress level (highest)(3)	Parental stress level (less high) (2)
		Low un-fulfillment of Parent's expectation	Parental stress level (less high) (2)	Parental stress level (lowest) (1)

Highest 3, lowest 1

5.3 Limitation of the study

As the research is in qualitative approach, the sample size is relatively small. The small sample size of participants in this research project is not able to show the general facets of situations of dyslexic families in Hong Kong. Although six participants kindly provided a lot of information including their experiences and feelings, the small

sample size limited the diversity of content and representativeness. Therefore, the number of participants in the future study should be increased from six participants to twenty participants.

Second, the sampling method is limited to the representativeness of this research project. Purposive sampling is adopted in this research project, so sampling diversity may be limited and affect the representativeness of research outcome. Therefore, quota sampling should replace purposive sampling which means that different populations should be included in the research. It will not ignore its targeted participants. Moreover, the stress status of the Informants can be more concretely and thoroughly understood if it can be combined with quantitative research and an indicator stress index analysis. It potentially improves the representativeness of the research study.

Thirdly, the factor of educational level and economic conditions of the parents are not the focus of research. Parents' self-esteem and resilience are the factors affecting the stress level of parenting, so these factors may affect the representativeness of the study.

Lastly, face-to-face interviews were not possible under the surging COVID-19.

Some of the informants were interviewed by telephone so the researcher could not identify the non-verbal communication and behaviours of the informants.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the stress of parenting a dyslexia child under the impacts of dyslexia on the child, the parents' expectation and self-esteem to explore the development and implications on social services. Parent-child relationship and communication between parents and SEN children, improving parents' strategies for coping with stress, enhancing parents' use of more effective parenting methods, enhancing parental parenting efficacy, providing peer support and improving parents' mental health can reduce parental stress. It is important to promote family harmony and maintain human wellbeing. According to the findings of the research, parents' parenting stress on family (marital relationship and parental support), children (character, emotion, self-care ability) and others (role stereotypes, social factors). Most of the social services provided for SEN children focus on the needs of the children but ignored the emotional and mental needs of their parents. In the future, parental awareness (such as effective parenting, stress coping strategies, thinking from multiple perspectives), behaviours (such as discipline and communication skills) and emotions (such as emotion regulation and release) should be strengthened to support the parents with dyslexia children. These help to enhance their parent-child relationship, improve their psychological well-being and reduce stress regarding SEN child care.

Secondly, Parents' educational level, economic status and personal health status may be the factors that impacted stress levels and self-esteem during they cope with the developmental problem of children can also be further explored. Indeed, the lack of economy of grassroots families makes parents may not able to purchase expensive private assessment and treatment services when parents find out that their children have special educational needs. They can only rely on the services provided by the government. A 2018 study by the Society for Community Organization pointed out that the support services coordinated by the primary Education Bureau Department for parents at the grassroots were not perfect, and the services received by children with SEN at the grassroots level were uneven. Coupled with the lack of economy, their development also lags behind children who can afford private services and treatment. Many parents of grassroots families have low academic levels and lack of understanding of dyslexia, so they can only "mechanically" refer to the suggestions of teachers, social workers or educational psychologists to take their children to participate in training. Wages at the grassroots level have not kept pace with rising prices and more families have fallen into poverty. Due to the poor family background, SEN children do not have enough support in life and education and cannot truly integrate into the mainstream society which affects the future direction

of employees and affects the family's upward social mobility.

This study found that parents' self-concept and expectations as parents are closely related to the individual's self-esteem. Families provide role models and influence identities. Parents' discipline mode, family's caring and acceptance, and family's socioeconomic status all affect the establishment of self-concept. If individuals have a clearer understanding of themselves, they will also have a more positive evaluation of themselves accordingly. Therefore, self-esteem and self-concept are linked. Dyslexia children are still in the stage of self-discovery when they enter adolescence at the age of 10-12. They will especially want to gain recognition from others, so parents are relatively unstable in nurturing and assisting the formation of children's self-esteem. However, parents' evaluations of themselves as parents also change as knowledge, ability and experience accumulate. Therefore, the future research direction can also be based on the parents' developmental needs for dyslexia children, the adjustment of parents' roles, the process of getting along, the educational side or the adjustment of influencing factors to provide appropriate protection and care for children to develop and further exploration in cultivating children's talents.

In short, this study is a start to exploring the parental stress of dyslexia children

and their parents' self-esteem when they parent their children with different impacts of dyslexia. Hope this study can help to be evidence to improve family social services to promote family harmony for parents of dyslexic children's mental health.

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Appendix A Consent Form

宏恩基督教學院 社會工作學院

探討兒童閱讀障礙程度與家長管教壓力的關係 參與研究同意書

本人 _____ 備悉上述研究計劃目的在研究閱讀障礙對兒童和父母對孩子期望的影響，從而分析父母壓力水平與個人自尊的關係以探索閱讀障礙兒童家長對社會服務的需求。本人亦知悉此研究負責人來自宏恩基督教學院之社會工作學士學位課程學生梁淑寧。

本人知悉所提供的資料將根據香港法例第 486 章《個人資料(私隱)條例》加以保護。而此研究所得的資料將會被錄音及可能被用作日後的研究及發表，但該研究及發表中亦不會包含能夠識別本人身份的細節。本人的私隱權利會得以保留，本人的個人資料不會被公開。

研究人員已向本人清楚解釋列在所附研究程序上的資料，本人明瞭當中涉及的利益及風險；本人自願參與研究項目，並同意參與提供個人意見。

本人知悉本人有權就程序的任何部分提出疑問，並有權隨時退出而不受任何懲處。

參與者簽署 : _____

參與者姓名 (正楷) : _____

家長或監護人 (如適用) 簽署 : _____

家長或監護人 (如適用) 姓名 : _____

研究人員簽署 : _____

研究人員姓名 : 梁淑寧

日期 : _____

備註： 就有關上述研究細則，可聯絡宏恩基督教學院社會工作學院 (陳家傑先生)電話：5804 4140 (內線：262)

Appendix B Tool(s) for Data Collection: The interviewing guide

Themes	Main Questions	Subtopics
Themes 1 Dyslexia influence → stress level	Would the dyslexia influence to the child's daily life and study that make parent feel stressful?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does "dyslexia" affect children's daily life? 2. Does "dyslexia" cause any difficulties for you to guide your child academically? 3. Which part will make you feel stressful when parenting dyslexia child? Why?
Themes 2 Parents' expectation → stress level	Would higher parental stress levels be induced by the un-fulfilment of parents' expectations of the dyslexia child?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you allocate the importance of child growth, academic performance and achievement? 2. How can the children do it? 3. Do you think you understand how parents' expectations and behaviors affect children so that you can resolve the difficulties and stress of parenting easier?
Themes 3 Parents' expectation ←→Parents' self-esteem	Would the fulfilment of parents' expectations maintain the higher self-esteem of parenting?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do your family, relatives and friends think about your child? 2. How do you think? 3. Do you think your child make you feel more confident and optimistic about the future?
Themes 4 Parents' self-esteem → stress level	Would the high self-esteem of parenting a dyslexia child reduce the parental stress level?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think your child brings to your life? 2. Are you satisfied with how you are parenting your children?