Profile of Participants

Total Participants: 25

Gender

- 88% Female
- 12% Male

Current Educational Status

- Completed F.6: 12%
- F.5: 24%
- F.4: 24%
- F.3: 16%
- F.2: 4%
- University: 4%

Place of Birth

- 60% Hong Kong Born Participants
- 40% Pakistan Born Participants

Participants are all ethnically Pakistanis, born in either Hong Kong or Pakistan.

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Dreams of Pakistani Children

Key Findings

1. Culture is embedded into all aspects of life
   Culture differs per family and it constrains Pakistani girls. Birthplace impacts culture.

2. Parents treat boys and girls differently
   Girls are required to have a better life, Hong Kong is their home.

3. Islam is supportive of girls education
   Girls study the Holy Qur’an
   “Islam supports gender equality, protects women.”
   “[the hijab is a] protective piece of clothing and that, when worn, is associated with a sense of belonging and freedom.”

4. Girls have dreams to work but face barriers
   The dream:
   -> All want to work
   Barriers:
   1. Parents and Extended Family
   2. Chinese language:
      (to be a doctor/ nurse)

5. Girls are engaged at a young age
   Typical age for engagement: 14 to 15
   Most marry between 20 to 22, but it depends on the family
   Typical age for marriage: 18 to 22
   Engagement comes with the responsibility to uphold the “honour” and expectations of two families – not just one.

6. Is it FORCED or Arranged Marriage?
   Girls are not opposed to ARRANGED marriages
   BUT Feel trapped.

   Arranged Marriage:
   Parents make an introduction to a potential husband and the girl has a choice.
   Forcéd Marriage:
   The girl has no choice.
   Spouse is often first cousin
   Marriage may be for convenience – to obtain a HK visa.
   Marriage may also be to strengthen family bonds.
   The girl may be invited to “approve” a husband but actually the girl has little say.

7. It is difficult to say no to marriage
   She thinks she is going “on holiday” to Pakistan
   She comes back married, sometimes pregnant, has to discontinue education.

8. Forced marriage diminishes a girl
   Girls feel diminished by forced marriage:
   “Rather be called a brown girl, than be asked do you marry at a young age? It makes me think differently about my own culture.”
   “At first, they had chosen someone for me, were pushing me to say yes and then scaring me if I said no. I felt useless after my engagement, that I couldn’t stop it or stand up for myself – felt so demotivated, lost focus after my engagement.”

9. If a girl could choose...
   She would choose a husband who
   • supports her having a career
   • is financially stable
   • is respectful
   • is educated
   She would complete education and marry after the age of 24.
   She live a life free of poverty.

10. If her dream does not come true...
    In 10 years time...
    “Just being a housewife”
    “I would be home, crying, cooking food, doing house-work or arguing.”
    “Bad life. If I have to marry before I want to, it’s fine”
    “Having to return to Pakistan.”
    “Poverty”

11. All Pakistani children face discrimination
    The Hijab poses problems for Muslim girls:
    “(I have) to hide the Hijab for fear of discrimination.”
    On public transport, Muslim girls and boys experience discrimination:
    “My mother and I have experienced discrimination publicly on public transport. My mother accidently pushed a local girl. She responded, retarded.”
    “On public transport, people cover their noses.”
    The “smell” of Pakistanis, remains a point of discrimination:
    “(We have) been in Hong Kong all my life. People still discriminate, and disrespect by saying things such as, you smell bad, go away from here.”

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Recommendations

Share & learn International Best Practices

Support in Pakistan
Call Mira 9682 3100

Forced marriage list

HKSARG

More access to all girls secondary school
Keeping girls in HK
Keeping girls safe

Cultural sensitivity training for frontline practitioners

Imams across Hong Kong

Raise awareness of fathers

Raise awareness of mothers

Girls

Where to get help

Commend champion fathers who have supported their daughters

Make it financially possible
Make it community acceptable

What the Holy Qu’ran says about girls education

Educating a daughter
Educating a family

Link between education & poverty

What the Holy Qu’ran says about girls education

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