

Panel 3

Child Care and Family Support

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Dr. Lai Ching LEUNG is an Associate Professor of Department of Applied Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong. Her research interests are gender studies, social policy and social work. She is the author of *Lone Mothers, Social Security and the Family in Hong Kong* and the Chief Editor of the book "Gender and Social Work". She is currently working on two research projects namely "Making Policy for Child Care in Hong Kong and Why do men care?" and "The experiences of male caregivers in Hong Kong as principal investigator".

Title

Financial Support for Child Care in Hong Kong: Is Cash Allowance a Way Out?

Abstract

How much money we have to spend on raising a child? What is the cost pay by carers in taking care of their children? Over the past decades, various forms of financial support for caring children have been provided in western countries. Examples of such support are the Child Allowance and Parental Benefits in Sweden, the Universal Child Benefit in Canada and the Carer's Allowance in the UK. In Asia, Japan introduced the Child Allowance for all families for children under the age of 15, and Singapore introduced the Baby Bonus Scheme for families with up to four children. By contrast, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government provides minimal financial assistance to carers only for those least able to help themselves. Learning the lessons from the other countries, what has to be done to relieve carer's isolation and reduce the cost that shouldered by them in Hong Kong? Is cash payment increases the choice of carers in caring or trapping them in the role of carer? What is the policy issue related to the payment for care regarding the welfare orientation of the Hong Kong government? This paper aims to discuss the possible measures that help to release the burden of carers in child care. Discussion is based on the views of carers of young children in Hong Kong on how they think about their contribution should be recognized and what kind of financial support in caring they expected.