

社評 雙語道

# 增幼兒託管支援 紓緩父母壓力

## Enhanced Child Care Support Can Help Relieve Parents' Stress

原文

下文摘錄自2022年5月3日香港《文匯報》：

社協公布的一項調查顯示，逾六成的基層婦女過去幾個月因為照顧子女而停止工作，令家庭整體收入銳減，反映本港幼兒託管機構不足對雙職家庭構成的影響，在疫情下更顯嚴重，尤其是缺乏家庭支援的單親母親更是「兩難」，顧不了子女，就顧不到「飯碗」。本港近年出生人口屢見新低，人口老化嚴重，政府有必要從政策層面檢討增加對父母的支援，既為激活經濟活力，也為刺激生育率；既要經濟上的激勵，也要減輕精神壓力層面提供支援。

過去數月因為疫情衝擊，所有資助幼兒中心、暫託幼兒服務及學前兒童課餘託管服務均於2月28日起停止提供服務，對有年幼子女的家庭產生巨大影響。調查顯示，逾六成的基層婦女為照顧子女而停止工作，失去收入；而且疫下婦女照顧及料理家庭的時間，由以往平均9.3小時上升至13.3小時，照顧者負荷指數平均達12.7分（13為最高分），反映承受「高負荷」壓力，隨時爆發。隨著疫情緩解，資助幼兒中心由今日起可以彈性安排幼兒返回中心接受服務，父母的壓力或許稍見減輕。

全港合共有6,228個課餘託管名額，平均近60名學童爭一個託管名額，資助幼兒中心平均使用率長年維持在99%以上，輪候人數眾多，

服務供不應求。雖然有社區保母彌補不足，但社區保母大多並無受過照顧兒童培訓，更多是做家務。託管服務不足令家長未能安心投入勞動市場，不少媽媽更是被迫離開工作崗位，久而久之會喪失工作能力。多位議員多年來一直向特區政府反映，但改善不明顯。期待下屆政府可以正視問題，在社區增設更多託管中心。

另一方面，本港僱員工時較長，父母不能準時下班，也是導致難以釋放婦女勞動力的重要原因。因此有學者認為，歸根到底還是僱員保障問題，應訂立標準工時，明確僱主有超時「補水」，才可讓家長放心使用託管服務。

本港面臨嚴峻的人口老化困境，出生率每況愈下。過去5年，每年出生人數由2016年的6.09萬人持續下降至2019年的5.29萬人，再進一步下降至前年的4.3萬人及去年的3.7萬人。短短幾年間出生人數銳減四成，幅度驚人。這固然與新冠疫情有關，但在政策層面上，本港激勵生育的政策也明顯不足。一方面是經濟上的壓力，在樓價高企、生活成本高昂的今天，很多父母都盡可能少生育，須政策上加大激勵；另一方面是照顧上的精神壓力，這方面則須增加託管中心名額，盡快訂立疫情託管安排，讓失業或開工不足的基層婦女出外工作，以減輕她們的照顧壓力；此外，還要完善社區保母的培訓，提升其照顧兒童技能，提升服務質素。



◆幼兒託管對雙職家庭而言影響甚大，如能增加託管中心名額，可讓更多基層婦女出外工作。 資料圖片

譯文

According to the results of a survey recently released by the Society for Community Organization, more than 60 per cent of the grassroots women interviewed have stopped working over the past few months to take care of their children, causing a drastic reduction in their overall family income. This shows that dual-career families are affected by inadequate child care services, especially during the pandemic. In particular, single mothers who lack family support have to face the dilemma of juggling their jobs and children. In recent years, the number of births in Hong Kong has repeatedly hit record lows, resulting in serious ageing population problems. It is necessary for the Government to review its policy and enhance its support to parents, so as to stimulate economic vibrancy and birth rates. To achieve this, the Government will have to provide economic incentives as well as support to help parents cope with their mental stress.

Over the past few months, due to the coronavirus outbreak, all aided child care centre services, occasional child care services, after school care

services for pre-primary children had been suspended from 28 February, causing a significant impact on families with young children. The survey shows that more than 60 per cent of grassroots women stopped working and lost their income in order to take care of their children. Moreover, during the pandemic, the time women spent on taking care of their families increased from an average of 9.3 hours to 13.3 hours, and the average Caregiver Strain Index was reported to be 12.7 out of 13, showing that caregivers experienced a high level of burden and may burn out anytime. As the pandemic eases, aided child care centres have gradually resumed services and flexibly arranged children to return to the centres to help relieve the stress of the parents.

Currently, there are 6,228 places in the After School Care Programme in Hong Kong, meaning nearly 60 school children are competing for each place. The average utilisation rate of the aided child care centres is constantly kept at 99 per cent or above. Given the long waiting list, the supply of services is inadequate. While home-based child carers are available to help make up the shortfall in services, most of these

child carers have not received child care training, and they mostly offer assistance by helping families do their housework. Due to inadequate child care services, parents are not able to keep their minds on work; many mothers are even forced to leave their jobs, and they gradually lose the ability to work as time passes. Over the years, a number of legislators have reflected their views to the Government, but there has not been any significant improvement. It is hoped that the next-term Government would look into the problem and increase the number of child care centres in the community.

On the other hand, employees in Hong Kong have long working hours. The fact that parents are not able to leave work on time is one of the major reasons why it has been hard to unleash the labour power of women. Therefore, some scholars believe that the core of the problem lies in a lack of protection for employees, and that the Government should introduce standard working hours and overtime compensation arrangements in order for parents to make use of the child care services available.

Continued decline in fertility rates has caused

serious population ageing problems in Hong Kong. Over the past five years, the number of births dropped from 60,900 in 2016 to 52,900 in 2019, and further to 43,000 and 37,000 respectively in 2020 and 2021. It is alarming to see how birth rates fell rapidly by 40 per cent over just a few years' time. While this could be attributed to the pandemic, it is evident that there were no adequate policies in place to stimulate birth rates in the city. On one hand, given the high property prices and living costs, many parents who are faced with financial pressure avoid having children and need to be offered more incentives to give birth; on the other hand, the mental stress of taking care of a child is also an issue. The Government must increase the number of places in child care centres and establish child care arrangements that cater to the needs arising from the pandemic, so that grassroots women who are unemployed or underemployed can go to work. In addition, the training of home-based child carers also needs to be enhanced, so that the skills of child carers as well as the quality of the services provided by them can be improved.

## 句式明顯差異大 中英分句一樣難

恒 大譯站

隔星期一見報

我們分析中英對照的語料時，有時想找出英漢語的對應語義單位，一般首先遇到的一個困難，是如何把篇章分成便於分析的單位。中英文分段方式不一樣，這不難理解，稍為考察一下中英文報章便可略知一二。但以段落作為仔細分析的單位，一般太大了，不利分析，除非想要分析篇章的文步。只考察詞組和詞等較小的語言單位，卻一般不足以考究各種語言詮釋人類經驗的規律，所以很多時候第一層分析單位是句。

然而，中英文的分句方式明顯差異很大，而且不易理解。這裏中文句子的定義是以句號分隔的單位，英文則用句點。一般的講法是中文句子比英文長，因為英文句子有只能帶一組帶時式的動詞詞組的限制，中文卻沒有，反而有所謂流水句的特色。有些中文語法分析會用某種英語的拆句方式，即是句 (sentence) 和子句 (clause)。句以句號分隔；複句由子句組成，逗號分隔。

不過，用這種方式看中文其實不太合理，而且十分困難，只要我們看看稍舊的文章，便會察覺中文的「句」有太多「子句」了。細看之下，可能一個四字詞的資訊量已經等於兩句子句。用這種方法，會有形形色色的類似問題。其實這樣分析英語句子，也會有

同樣的問題，只不過沒那麼明顯。

另一種分析方法來自系統功能語法，當中句子的觀點並沒有子句 (clause) 和句 (sentence) 的分別，只有句 (clause) 和句群 (clause complex) 的差異。Sentence 的概念還是有的，但這只是書寫文字的慣例，並不是語言本身的固有規律。

其實這不難理解，只要看看現在大家用手機打信息，在論壇留言時的規律便知道，只用空格分隔，不用標點，因為這更貼近口語，只用不同時長的停頓分隔。從語言分析角度看，第一種方式仍很主流，因為第二種分句方法要很多人力處理，不利大量自動化的語料分析。

然而，這有時候會令我們誤解某些語言的本質，所以分析口語語料還是很重要。我們每天大部分時間用語言溝通，加上我們往往低估了口語和書面語的差異，這會使學生能寫文章，但與人談不上幾句。科技進步了，現在收集、處理、分析口語語料比從前容易得多，或許也可令我們更了解語言的本質。

現代文字或多或少是表語 (logographic) 符號，不純粹表音 (phonographic) 或表意 (ideographic)。常見的表意符號有「嚴禁吸煙」的標誌，由一個表形 (pictographic) 符號 (香煙) 和一個表意符號 (圓形加斜線) 組成，往往分別塗上兩種顏色。我們理解這個符號時，不經語言；純表音符號有國際音標 (IPA)，當中每個符號代表一種音質。但我們理解文字時，大部分情況都是必經語言的。

## 趣談英語

逢星期一見報

BRITISH COUNCIL

LearnEnglish Teens

### A good night's sleep

Do you find it difficult to sleep? Read the following text and do the exercises.

At exam time it's important to sleep well. We spoke to Doctor Baker who recently did some research into sleeping habits. If you're not sleeping well, these tips might help.

Doctor Baker gave us his top tips for getting a good night's sleep. First, he suggests you turn off the television before you go to sleep. Some people think they can sleep well with the TV on, but that's not true.

The noise and lights mean you really don't sleep well, so turn the TV off before you go to sleep.

Secondly, try not to think too much before bedtime. Try doing your hardest homework earlier in the evening. Do easier homework later. If your brain is too busy and full of ideas, it takes longer to get to sleep.

Also, don't play games on your phone for a few hours before you go to sleep. Games will make your brain busy and active. Don't use your phone as an alarm clock. Turn off your phone before you go to sleep and leave your phone in another room.

Music helps us relax. Listen to soft music before you go to sleep. Don't listen to loud, fast music. Turn the sound down low and turn it off before you try to sleep. Remember, it is important for all of us to sleep well. Sleep helps us stay fit healthy.



Activity 2 - Check your vocabulary: gap fill Complete the sentences with a word from the box.

tips	hardest	turn off
sleep	down low	research

1. Doctor Baker did some \_\_\_\_\_ into people's sleeping habits.
2. Doctor Baker gives us his top \_\_\_\_\_ on getting a good night's sleep.
3. He suggests you \_\_\_\_\_ the television before you go to sleep.
4. It's good advice to do your \_\_\_\_\_ homework early in the evening.
5. Leave your phone in a different room. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ with your phone.

1. research; 2. tips; 3. turn off; 4. hardest; 5. sleep

To find more English language activities visit [www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishteens](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglishteens)

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