



**Jockey Club**  
**"Give Marriage a Chance" Project**  
**賽馬會「婚姻・再思」計劃**

**An Exploratory Study into the Factors  
Leading to Divorce Ideation and the Protective Factors  
of Preserving Marriage of the Service Users of  
the Jockey Club "Give Marriage a Chance" Project**



**賽馬會「婚姻・再思」計劃服務使用者  
考慮離婚及維繫婚姻的因素之探索性研究**

**Final Report**  
**總結報告**

**May 2024**

主辦機構



研究顧問機構



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#### **Final Report 總結報告**

**May 2024**

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Findings of this research have shed light on the factors leading to divorce ideation and the protective factors of preserving marriage. The research team has also recommended service direction for helping couples who are struggling with divorce decisions. Our heart-felt appreciation must go to the Principal Investigator, Dr. CHOI, Wai Man Anna and her research team of The University of Hong Kong. With their hard work and enthusiasm, this first-of-its-kind research has successfully made concrete of our exploration into this area.

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It is our sincere wish that professional practice and evidence-based research can go hand in hand in deepening our understanding of and developing our intervention repertoires for the services of families and their children.

Mrs. Chiu Chui Yuen Fun Angela  
Executive Director  
The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council

# Table of Content

|                                                   |           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER ONE</b>                                | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>                               | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Research Background                           | 1         |
| Divorce Trend in Hong Kong                        | 1         |
| Risk Factors and Protective Factors of Divorce    | 2         |
| Further Understanding about Divorce Ideation      | 2         |
| 1.2 Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project  | 4         |
| Organisation Background                           | 4         |
| Project Foci                                      | 4         |
| Project Objectives                                | 5         |
| 1.3 Research Objectives                           | 6         |
| 1.4 Organisation of the Research Study Report     | 7         |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO</b>                                | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>                       | <b>8</b>  |
| 2.1 Introduction                                  | 8         |
| 2.2 In-depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion | 9         |
| Introduction                                      | 9         |
| Data Collection Methods                           | 9         |
| Data Analysis and Reporting                       | 10        |
| 2.3 Evaluation Survey                             | 12        |
| Introduction                                      | 12        |
| Data Collection Methods                           | 12        |
| Quality Control Measures                          | 12        |
| Data Processing and Data Analysis                 | 13        |
| Measures to Protect Data Confidentiality          | 13        |
| 2.4 Limitations of the Study                      | 13        |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>                              | <b>14</b> |
| <b>DEMOGRAPHICS OF SERVICE USERS</b>              | <b>14</b> |
| 3.1 Introduction                                  | 14        |
| 3.2 Socio-demographics                            | 14        |
| Gender and Age                                    | 14        |
| Educational Attainment                            | 15        |
| Economic Activity Status                          | 16        |
| Personal Monthly Income                           | 16        |
| Year of Residence in Hong Kong                    | 17        |
| Religious Beliefs                                 | 18        |

|                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 3.3 Marriage and Family.....                                                         | 19        |
| Age of Getting Married.....                                                          | 19        |
| Number of Family Members.....                                                        | 20        |
| District of Residence.....                                                           | 20        |
| Duration of Premarital Relationship .....                                            | 21        |
| Having Children.....                                                                 | 21        |
| Living with Family .....                                                             | 22        |
| History of Divorce among Family Members and Friends .....                            | 24        |
| 3.4 Current Situation of Service Users .....                                         | 26        |
| Application of Services.....                                                         | 26        |
| Situations of Divorce .....                                                          | 26        |
| Areas of Case Counseling Services .....                                              | 27        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>                                                             | <b>32</b> |
| <b>FACTORS LEADING TO DIVORCE IDEATION.....</b>                                      | <b>32</b> |
| 4.1 Introduction.....                                                                | 32        |
| 4.2 Qualitative Findings.....                                                        | 33        |
| Demographics of Participants.....                                                    | 33        |
| Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Individual Level.....                          | 34        |
| Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Couple Level .....                             | 44        |
| Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Family Level.....                              | 50        |
| Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Societal level .....                           | 54        |
| 4.3 Quantitative Findings.....                                                       | 57        |
| Reasons for Divorce Ideation (Service Users).....                                    | 57        |
| Reasons for Divorce Ideation (Spouses).....                                          | 59        |
| 4.4 Summary.....                                                                     | 61        |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>                                                            | <b>62</b> |
| <b>PROTECTIVE FACTORS LEADING TO DECIDE ON PRESERVING MARRIAGE .....</b>             | <b>62</b> |
| 5.1 Introduction.....                                                                | 62        |
| 5.2 Qualitative Findings.....                                                        | 63        |
| Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Individual Level ..... | 63        |
| Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Couple Level .....     | 65        |
| Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Family Level.....      | 70        |
| 5.3 Quantitative Findings.....                                                       | 73        |
| Reasons for not Making Decision on Divorce (Service Users).....                      | 73        |
| Reasons for not Making Decision on Divorce (Spouses).....                            | 75        |
| 5.4 Summary.....                                                                     | 76        |

|                                                                      |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>                                             | <b>77</b>  |
| <b>POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT .....</b>                         | <b>77</b>  |
| 6.1 Introduction.....                                                | 77         |
| 6.2 Qualitative Findings.....                                        | 77         |
| Positive Impacts on Service Users.....                               | 77         |
| Positive Impacts on Children.....                                    | 83         |
| Positive Impacts on Marital Relationship.....                        | 86         |
| 6.3 Quantitative Findings.....                                       | 90         |
| Evaluation Form of Counseling Services .....                         | 90         |
| Evaluation Form of Activities.....                                   | 95         |
| 6.4 Summary.....                                                     | 99         |
| <b>CHAPTER SEVEN.....</b>                                            | <b>100</b> |
| <b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>                          | <b>100</b> |
| 7.1 Conclusion .....                                                 | 100        |
| Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation .....                            | 100        |
| Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage .....    | 101        |
| Positive impacts of the Project.....                                 | 102        |
| 7.2 Recommendations.....                                             | 103        |
| Develop Specific Methods and Interventions.....                      | 103        |
| Enhance Service Development .....                                    | 104        |
| Conduct Professional Capacity Building.....                          | 105        |
| Carry Out Follow-up Study .....                                      | 105        |
| Facilitate Community Education Initiatives .....                     | 106        |
| Establish Collaboration among Social Service Providers.....          | 106        |
| Increase Funding for Divorce Decision Counseling Service.....        | 107        |
| <b>ANNEX I   IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (SERVICE USERS) .....</b>  | <b>108</b> |
| <b>ANNEX II   FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (CASEWORKERS).....</b> | <b>108</b> |
| <b>ANNEX III CASE INFORMATION FORM .....</b>                         | <b>108</b> |
| <b>ANNEX IV EVALUATION FORM OF COUNSELING SERVICES .....</b>         | <b>108</b> |
| <b>ANNEX V   EVALUATION FORM OF ACTIVITIES .....</b>                 | <b>108</b> |
| <b>ANNEX VI REFERENCES.....</b>                                      | <b>108</b> |

# List of Tables and Diagrams

|                                                                                                                             |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>                                                                                                    | <b>1</b>  |
| Diagram 1.1.1: Number of divorce decrees granted and crude divorce rate in selected years..                                 | 1         |
| Diagram 1.3.1: Objectives of the Study.....                                                                                 | 6         |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>                                                                                                    | <b>8</b>  |
| Diagram 2.1.1: Overview of research methods .....                                                                           | 8         |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>                                                                                                  | <b>14</b> |
| Table 3.2.1: Age groups of service users .....                                                                              | 14        |
| Table 3.2.2: Age groups of service users' spouses.....                                                                      | 15        |
| Table 3.2.3: Educational attainment of service users.....                                                                   | 15        |
| Table 3.2.4: Educational attainment of service users' spouses .....                                                         | 15        |
| Table 3.2.5: Economic activity status of service users .....                                                                | 16        |
| Table 3.2.6: Economic activity status of service users' spouses.....                                                        | 16        |
| Table 3.2.7: Personal monthly income of service users.....                                                                  | 17        |
| Table 3.2.8: Personal monthly income of service users' spouses .....                                                        | 17        |
| Table 3.2.9: Service users' year of residence in Hong Kong .....                                                            | 17        |
| Table 3.2.10: Service users' spouses' year of residence in Hong Kong.....                                                   | 18        |
| Table 3.2.11: Whether service users have religious beliefs .....                                                            | 18        |
| Table 3.2.12: Whether service users' spouses have religious beliefs.....                                                    | 18        |
| Table 3.3.1: Service users' age of getting married.....                                                                     | 19        |
| Table 3.3.2: Service users' spouses' age of getting married .....                                                           | 19        |
| Table 3.3.3: Number of family members of service users .....                                                                | 20        |
| Table 3.3.4: District of residence of service users .....                                                                   | 20        |
| Table 3.3.5: Duration of premarital relationship and whether service users have used<br>premarital counseling services..... | 21        |
| Table 3.3.6: Whether the service users have children with their spouses.....                                                | 21        |
| Table 3.3.7: Number of Child(ren) that service users have .....                                                             | 22        |
| Table 3.3.8: Whether the service users live with their own and/or their spouses' family<br>members.....                     | 22        |
| Chart 3.3.9: Type of family members with whom service users are currently living.....                                       | 23        |
| Chart 3.3.10: Type of family members with whom service users have once lived with .....                                     | 23        |
| Table 3.3.11: Whether the service users have family members who have divorced.....                                          | 24        |
| Chart 3.3.12: Type of family members who have divorced.....                                                                 | 24        |
| Table 3.3.13: Whether the service users have friends who have divorced .....                                                | 25        |
| Table 3.4.1: Application of Divorce and Involvement of Divorce Procedures.....                                              | 26        |
| Table 3.4.2: Referral source of the service users .....                                                                     | 26        |
| Diagram 3.4.3: Service users' situations of divorce .....                                                                   | 27        |

|                                                                                                                                       |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Diagram 3.4.4: Areas of case counseling services received by service users.....                                                       | 28        |
| Diagram 3.4.5: Groups and talk services in which service users engage .....                                                           | 29        |
| Diagram 3.4.6: Marital status at the end of the counseling services.....                                                              | 30        |
| Diagram 3.4.7: Type of services to which the service users are referred .....                                                         | 31        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>                                                                                                              | <b>32</b> |
| Table 4.2.1: Demographics of the service users participating in in-depth interviews .....                                             | 33        |
| Diagram 4.3.1: Reasons for divorce ideation (service users) .....                                                                     | 57        |
| Table 4.3.2: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by gender (service users).....                                                    | 58        |
| Table 4.3.3: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by whether the service users had divorced<br>family members (service users) ..... | 58        |
| Diagram 4.3.4: Reasons for divorce ideation (spouses) .....                                                                           | 59        |
| Table 4.3.5: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by gender (spouses).....                                                          | 60        |
| Table 4.3.6: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by whether the service users had divorced<br>family members (spouses) .....       | 60        |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>                                                                                                             | <b>62</b> |
| Diagram 5.3.1: Reasons for not making decision on divorce (service users).....                                                        | 73        |
| Table 5.3.2: Reasons for not making decision on divorce, analysed by gender (service users)<br>.....                                  | 74        |
| Table 5.3.3: Reasons for not making decision on divorce, analysed by the result of the case<br>(service users) .....                  | 74        |
| Diagram 5.3.4: Reasons for not making decision on divorce (spouses).....                                                              | 75        |
| <b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>                                                                                                              | <b>77</b> |
| Table 6.3.1: Parents' choices of handling marital difficulties (%).....                                                               | 91        |
| Table 6.3.2: Parents' Communication with spouses .....                                                                                | 91        |
| Table 6.3.3: Parents' Recognition of Divorce's Impacts on Children.....                                                               | 92        |
| Table 6.3.4: Parents' satisfaction with the service .....                                                                             | 92        |
| Table 6.3.5: The most impressive learnings gained by the parents.....                                                                 | 93        |
| Table 6.3.6: Perceived impacts on children .....                                                                                      | 94        |
| Diagram 6.3.7: Satisfaction with talks.....                                                                                           | 95        |
| Diagram 6.3.8: Satisfaction with groups.....                                                                                          | 96        |
| Diagram 6.3.9: Helpfulness of talks .....                                                                                             | 96        |
| Diagram 6.3.10: Helpfulness of groups .....                                                                                           | 97        |
| Diagram 6.3.11: Knowledge and skills acquisition in talks.....                                                                        | 97        |
| Diagram 6.3.12: Knowledge and skills acquisition in groups .....                                                                      | 98        |

# Executive Summary

## Research Background

In order to gain more insight into the Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project (“the Project”) and evaluate it, the Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (HKCMAC) commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct an Exploratory Study into the factors leading to divorce ideation and the protective factors of preserving marriage of the service users (“the Study”) in 2023.

## Research Objectives

The Objectives of the studies are:

- To identify factors leading to divorce ideation;
- To identify protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage;
- To explore the positive impacts of the Project on service users; and
- To explore the implication of the findings on the recommendations for service provision to couples struggling with divorce decisions.

## Methodology

Mixed data collection methods were adopted in this Study. Qualitative views were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and quantitative information was gathered by questionnaire survey.

In order to collect qualitative data, the service users and caseworkers of the services of the Project were recruited to participate in in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion respectively. In total, 21 service users and 7 caseworkers were interviewed during the period of May 2023 and September 2023.

For quantitative methods, the Case Information Form, the Evaluation Form of Counseling Services and the Evaluation Form of Activities are designed to study service users’ demographics, factors for divorce ideation and service users’ views on the services of the Project. In total, 153 Case Information Forms, 163 Evaluation Form of Counseling Services, and 596 Evaluation Form of Activities were collected during the period from August 2021 to August 2023.

# Key Findings

## *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation*

The factors leading to divorce ideation are organised and categorised by using the Ecological model. Four levels of factors are identified, namely (a) individual level, (b) couple level, (c) family level and (d) societal level.

Individual level refers to an individual's actions, beliefs and feelings. At the individual level, it is found that unreasonable behaviours (i.e. controlling behaviours, aggressive behaviours, gambling), extramarital and pre-marital affairs, emotional problems, unmet spousal expectations, gender and family values from the family of origin, differences in values, and difference in sexual orientation were the factors leading to divorce ideation.

Couple level refers to the interactions between two parties of a couple. At the couple level, various factors could lead to divorce ideation of the service users, including communication problems, weak pre-marriage bonding, inability to resolve conflicts, weak intimacy and sexual dissatisfaction.

Family level refers to other family member's involvement in a couple's marriage. At the family level, the change in family life cycle due to childbearing, different parenting styles and parent-child triangulation conflicts, as well as in-law conflicts from the extended families were the factors associated with divorce ideation.

Societal level refers to the influences of social situations or social values. At the societal level, the traditional perception of gender roles and COVID-19 pandemic could adversely affect the marital relationships of couples.

Besides, the quantitative findings of the Case Information Form displayed that the most prevalent factors leading to divorce ideation among the service users were communication problems (78.4%), followed by extramarital affairs (36.6%), temperamental incompatibility (34.0%), differences in child-rearing and parenting (28.1%) and differences in values (27.5%). Other factors included mental health problems (24.2%), verbal violence (20.9%), in-law conflicts (17.6%), etc. Analysed by gender, female service users were more likely to consider divorce due to communication problems and differences in values, when compared to male service users. Besides, service users who had divorced family members were more likely to think of divorce because of differences in child-rearing and parenting.

Although many of the factors identified in this study align with the results of a previous local study conducted by the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong in 2014, several notable and significant findings were explored further. At the individual level, sexual orientation first appears to be a factor leading to divorce ideation. At the family level, the influences of family of origin are highlighted as it could deeply affect an individual's gender and family values. At the societal level, the impacts of COVID-19 are definitely a new factor in this area of study but its influences were likely limited within a period of time during the pandemic. It caused financial strain of some families and changed the working patterns, which could also lead to the divorce ideation of some couples.

## *Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage*

The protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage are organised and categorised based on the Ecological model which identifies three different levels of resources that need attention to understand strong, happy, enduring marriages. These three levels are (a) individual level, (b) couple level, and (c) family level.

At the individual level, proactive help-seeking behaviours can give the service users and spouses a chance to face and deal with difficulties in marriage. Furthermore, the Project provided the service users with new perspectives on managing their marriage, including recognition of the importance of quality time and reflection on marital problems.

At the couple level, the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage include love and commitment, constructive engagement, positive communication, and hopefulness about marriage. From the quantitative data, it is also found that the service users who still had emotional connections (love and commitment) with their spouses might be more likely to stay in marriage or reconcile with spouses.

At the family level, family of origin and children's well-being were the key factors to making the decision on preserving marriage. Firstly, positive role models within the family of origin have a significant impact on motivating service users to prioritise unity within their marriages and families. Additionally, the presence of children and the responsibility of raising them often act as a protective factor in preserving marriages.

The quantitative data collected by the Case Information Form shows the most common reason for not making decision on divorce among the service users was child-related issues (e.g. children are still too young) (54.2%), followed emotional factors (e.g. still having emotional connection with spouse) (47.7%). Other reasons included values on marriage (28.1%), values (e.g. beliefs, cultural, and family values) (18.3%), financial factors (e.g. no income) (16.3%), etc.

Compared to the previous research, proactive help-seeking has emerged as a newly identified protective factor for preserving marriages. This approach provides individuals experiencing marital crises with increased opportunities to reflect upon and resolve their difficulties with the assistance of external sources, such as friends, significant others, and professionals. By actively seeking support and guidance, individuals can gain valuable insights and resources that aid them in navigating challenges and finding effective solutions to preserve their marriage. This recognition of the importance of seeking external help represents a significant advancement in understanding and addressing marital issues.

## *Positive Impacts of the Project*

The services of the Project had positive impacts on the service users, their children and marital relationships.

The positive impacts of the Project on the service users are categorised in terms of emotional and personal development. For emotional support, the Project could help the service users by facilitating emotional expression and ventilation, providing emotional support and guidance, equipping them with knowledge and skills to manage and regulate emotions, raising awareness of understanding their own emotions and needs, and facilitate the healing of emotional trauma. In terms of personal development, the Project could equip the service users with useful problem-solving skills enhance their self-understanding and foster personal development.

Considering the impacts on children, the Project was effective in addressing children's emotional well-being and promoting positive parent-child relationships for some service users.

Regarding the impacts on marital relationships, the Project could assist service users in enhancing communication with their spouses, have a reflection on marital relationships and going through the decision-making process of marital relationships with the assistance of caseworkers.

Besides, the findings of Evaluation Form of Counseling Services showed that the majority of the services users could recognised more choices of handling marital difficulties by allowing themselves to have time to consider the decision to divorce (77.6%), being willing to broaden their thinking through different perspectives before making the decision to divorce (92.3%) and being willing to give their marriages one more chance (84.0%). Also, it was found that more than half of the service users improve their communication with spouses by having an initial understanding of the communication patterns between themselves and their spouses (66.9%), and recognising the ways to reduce conflicts with their spouses (65.2%).

Moreover, the majority of the service users had recognised the impacts of divorce on their children. The overwhelming majority (97.1%) of them would consider the impact on their children when they thought about divorce, while the vast majority (90.2%) of them understood the impacts of divorce on the developmental and emotional health of children. In general, the service users recognised the positive impacts of the counseling service on them. The overwhelming majority of them thought the service was helpful to them (94.0%) and were satisfied with the service (95.2%). The vast majority (90.9%) of the children, on the other hand, stated that they were very satisfied after participating in the counseling and thought that it was very helpful to them.

Apart from counseling, there were other activities, such as talks, workshops, and groups, in the Project. The findings of Evaluation Form – Activities displayed that overwhelming majority of the service users were satisfied with the talks (88.9%) and the groups (91.4%) organised by the Project. Similarly, the vast majority thought that the activities was helpful to them (88.9%) and assisted them to acquire knowledge and skills (85.8%).

# Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Study, the research team put forward several recommendations at both the service level and community level. At the service level, it is recommended to develop specific methods and interventions that address the identified risk factors and protective factors associated with divorce, enhance service development, conduct professional capacity-building programmes and carry out a follow-up study on the long-term impacts of the Project. Besides, facilitating community education initiatives can also raise awareness about the importance of seeking help early, and expand knowledge and understanding in this area. At the community level, the research team suggests establishing collaborations among social service providers and increasing funding for divorce decision counseling services.

By implementing these recommendations at both the service and community levels, it is hoped that greater support and resources can be provided to individuals and couples experiencing marital difficulties, ultimately working towards the preservation and strengthening of marriages.

## *Develop Specific Methods and Interventions*

- Develop corresponding methods to reduce the impacts of risk factors of divorce, and enhance the protective factors in preserving marriage.
- Carry out intervention to mitigate traumatic experiences of marital conflicts on children.

## *Enhance Service Development*

- Extend the number of counseling sessions of the Project to enhance its capacity to provide more intensive and tailored support to service users.
- Collaborate with schools or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to offer play therapy services for those children in more accessible locations.

## *Conduct Professional Capacity Building Programmes*

- Provide clinical training with specialised topics, including divorce decision-making, communication and conflict resolution skills and intervention into extra-marital affairs, to practitioners.
- Organise service-sharing sessions in tertiary institutions, schools, Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs), and other social service organisations and professional bodies.

## *Carry Out Follow-up Study*

- Carry out a follow-up study to examine the long-term impacts of the Project on the service users.

### *Facilitate Community Education Initiatives*

- Step up promotion of the Project to promote proactive help-seeking behaviours on marital issues to reduce the influence of social stigma associated with help-seeking.
- Continue to conduct community education about issues related to marriage and family relationship via workshops, groups, talks, and videos and appropriate strategies can be explored to promote the educational materials.

### *Establish Collaboration among Social Service Providers*

- Establish collaboration among various social service providers, including governmental departments, co-parenting services, and mediation services, is crucial in providing comprehensive support to individuals and couples facing marital difficulties.

### *Increase Funding for Divorce Decision Counseling Service*

- To enhance the availability and quality of divorce decision counseling services, it is essential to allocate increased funding from government and community resources. This financial support will enable service providers to expand their offerings and develop specialised interventions for couples facing marital difficulties.

## 研究背景

為了更深入了解『賽馬會「婚姻・再思」計劃』（下稱「計劃」）及對其進行評估，香港公教婚姻輔導會（HKCMAC）委託香港大學在 2023 年進行一項探索性研究（下稱「本次研究」），以探討導致服務使用者產生離婚想法的因素和維繫婚姻的保護因素。

## 研究目的

本次研究的目的包括：

- 了解導致離婚想法產生的因素；
- 了解導致決定維繫婚姻的保護因素；
- 探討計劃對服務使用者的正面影響；以及
- 探討研究結果對為面臨離婚決定的夫婦提供服務建議的啟示。

## 研究方法

本次研究以混合研究法來收集資料，採用深入訪談及聚焦小組討論收集質性意見，以及透過問卷調查收集量化資料。

為收集質性資料，研究團隊和計劃的服務使用者及個案工作人員分別進行深入訪談及聚焦小組討論。在 2023 年 5 月至 2023 年 9 月期間，研究團隊總共訪問了 21 位服務使用者及 7 位個案工作人員。

在量化研究方面，研究團隊透過分析個案資料表、面談經驗測量表及活動評估問卷，以研究服務使用者的個人資料、導致離婚想法產生的因素，以及服務使用者對計劃服務的意見。在 2021 年 8 月至 2023 年 8 月期間，總共收集到 153 份個案資料表、163 份面談經驗測量表及 596 份活動評估問卷。

# 主要研究結果

## 導致離婚想法出現的因素

本次研究採用「生態系統理論」(Ecological model)對導致離婚想法產生的因素進行整理和分類，從而得出四個層面的因素，即是(a)個人層面；(b)夫婦層面；(c)家庭層面；以及(d)社會層面。

個人層面指個人的行為、信念和感受。在個人層面，本次研究發現不合理行為(即是控制行為、攻擊行為、賭博)、婚外情及婚前外遇、情緒問題、夫婦之間的期望落差、原生家庭的性別及家庭價值觀、價值觀分歧及性傾向差異均為導致離婚想法產生的因素。

夫婦層面指夫婦之間的互動。在夫婦層面，導致離婚想法產生的因素有多項，包括溝通問題、婚前感情連繫薄弱、缺乏解決衝突的方法、親密感淡薄及性生活不滿。

家庭層面指其他家庭成員對夫婦婚姻的參與。在家庭層面，生育造成的家庭生命週期變化、教養方式分歧和親子三角衝突、延伸家庭的姻親矛盾均為導致離婚想法產生的因素。

社會層面指社會情境或社會價值觀的影響。在社會層面，傳統的性別角色觀念和新冠肺炎(COVID-19)疫情對夫婦之間的婚姻關係產生不利影響。

此外，個案資料表的量化資料顯示，服務使用者產生離婚想法的最常見因素是溝通問題(78.4%)，其次是婚外情(36.6%)、性格不合(34.0%)、養育和管教子女的分歧(28.1%)及價值觀差異(27.5%)。其他因素包括心理健康問題(24.2%)、語言暴力(20.9%)、姻親衝突(17.6%)等。按性別分析，與男性服務使用者相比，女性服務使用者更有可能因為溝通問題和價值觀差異而考慮離婚。另外，曾有家庭成員離婚的服務使用者更有可能由於養育和管教子女的分歧而考慮離婚。

雖然本次研究得出的多項因素與香港大學防止自殺研究中心在2014年進行的一項本地研究的結果一致，但仍另有一些值得注意的重要發現。在個人層面，性傾向差異首次出現在本地同類研究中成為導致離婚想法產生的因素。在家庭層面，原生家庭的影響尤為突出，因為是項因素能夠深刻影響個人的性別和家庭。在社會層面，新冠肺炎的影響無疑是這個研究領域中的新因素，但其影響可能僅限於疫情這段時間。是項因素令一些家庭面臨經濟困難和工作模式轉變，這也可能導致部份夫婦產生離婚的想法。

## 導致決定維繫婚姻的保護因素

本次研究同樣採用「生態系統理論」(Ecological model)對維繫婚姻的保護因素進行整理和分類，結果得出三個不同層面的資源有助理解建立牢固、幸福和持久的婚姻。這三個層面包括(a)個人層面；(b)夫婦層面；以及(c)家庭層面。

在個人層面，主動的求助行為能夠令服務使用者及其配偶有機會面對和處理在婚姻中遇到的困難。再者，計劃亦為服務使用者提供了處理婚姻關係的新視角，包括認識夫婦相處的「寶貴時間」(quality time)的重要性，以及反思婚姻問題。

在夫婦層面，導致決定維繫婚姻的保護因素包括愛與承諾、溝通、建設性參與、正向溝通及婚姻保持希望。量化資料亦顯示對配偶仍有感情(愛與承諾)的服務使用者更有可能留在婚姻中或與配偶復合。

在家庭層面，原生家庭和子女的福祉是為維繫婚姻做決定的關鍵因素。首先，原生家庭內的正面榜樣有重大影響，能夠驅使服務使用者優先考慮婚姻和家庭的團結。此外，夫婦之間育有子女及養育子女的責任亦往往是維繫婚姻的保護因素。

根據個案資料表收集的量化資料顯示，服務使用者未能落實離婚決定的最常見原因為與子女有關的問題(例如子女的年齡太小)(54.2%)，其次是感情因素(例如對配偶仍有感情)(47.7%)。其他原因包括婚姻觀(28.1%)、價值觀念因素(如信仰、文化或個人的家庭觀念)(18.3%)、經濟因素(如沒有收入)(16.3%)等。

相較於以前的研究，主動的求助行為在維繫婚姻方面是新發現的保護因素。這種行動為經歷婚姻危機的人士提供了更多維繫婚姻的機會，在家人、朋友、和專業人士的協助下，他們可以反思和解決他們的困難。這些人士透過積極尋求支援和指導，得以獲得寶貴的深入意見和資源，有助他們應對挑戰，並找到有效的解決方案來維繫婚姻。對尋求外界協助的重要性有所認識，是了解和處理婚姻問題的重要一步。

## 計劃的正面影響

計劃的服務對服務使用者、他們的子女及婚姻關係均有正面影響。

計劃對服務使用者的正面影響可分為情緒支援和個人發展兩方面。在情緒支援方面，計劃有助服務使用者表達和抒發情緒，為他們提供情緒支援和引導，教導他們掌握管理和調節情緒的知識和技能，提升他們了解自身情緒和需要的意識，以及促進情感創傷的復原。在個人發展方面，計劃協助服務使用者掌握有效的問題解決技巧，增加他們的自我認識，促進個人發展。

在對子女的影響方面，計劃有效紓緩兒童的情緒健康問題，也為部份服務使用者建立正面的親子關係。

在對婚姻關係的影響方面，計劃能夠協助服務使用者改善與配偶的溝通、反思婚姻關係，以及在個案工作員的協助下經歷婚姻關係的抉擇過程。

此外，面談經驗測量表的調查結果顯示，大部分服務使用者認識到更多處理婚姻困難的選項，例如容許自己有多些時間考慮離婚決定（77.6%）、做離婚決定前願意透過不同的方向擴闊思考（92.3%）及願意嘗試給婚姻多個機會（84.0%）。此外，逾半服務使用者對自己與配偶的溝通模式有初步了解（66.9%），並認識到如何減少跟配偶的衝突（65.2%），從而改善與配偶的溝通。

再者，大部份服務使用者都認識到離婚對子女的影響。絕大部份的受訪者在思考離婚時會考慮對孩子的影響（97.1%）及明白父母離異對孩子發展和情緒健康的影響（90.2%）。整體而言，服務使用者認同面談對他們有正面影響。絕大部份的服務使用者認為服務對他們有幫助（94.0%），並對服務感到滿意（95.2%）。而絕大部份（90.9%）的子女則表示參加面談後感到非常滿意，認為對自己有很大幫助。

除了面談之外，計劃還舉辦了其他活動，例如講座、工作坊和小組。活動評估問卷的調查結果顯示，絕大部份的服務使用者對計劃舉辦的講座（88.9%）及小組（91.4%）感到滿意。同樣，絕大部份的服務使用者認為活動對他們有幫助（88.9%），協助他們學到知識和技能（85.8%）。

## 建議

研究團隊根據研究結果，在服務層面和社會層面提出多項建議。在服務層面，建議包括針對研究發現的離婚風險因素及保護因素來制定具體的服務方法和介入措施、推進服務發展、舉行專業能力提升活動及進行追蹤研究。此外，加強社區教育項目也能夠令公眾更加認識到盡早尋求協助的重要性，以及有助推廣與婚姻相關的知識。在社會層面，研究團隊建議促進各類服務提供機構的合作，以及增加對離婚決定輔導服務的資助。

透過在服務層面和社會層面實行這些建議，研究團隊希望社會為經歷婚姻困難的人士和夫婦提供更多的支援和資源，為維繫和鞏固婚姻而努力。

### 制定具體的服務方法和介入措施

- 制定相應的服務方法以減輕離婚風險因素的影響，以及加強維繫婚姻的保護因素。
- 進行介入措施以減少婚姻衝突對兒童造成的創傷經驗。

### 推進服務發展

- 增加計劃的面談次數，向服務使用者提供更深入和更有針對性的支援。
- 與學校及其他社會服務機構合作，增加服務地點，以便利兒童接受遊戲治療服務。

### 舉行專業能力提升活動

- 為業界工作人員提供專業主題的臨床培訓，包括離婚決定、溝通和衝突解決技巧，以及對婚外情的介入措施。
- 在大專院校、學校、綜合家庭服務中心及其他社會服務機構和專業團體舉辦服務分享會。

### 進行追蹤研究

- 進行追蹤研究，以探討計劃對服務使用者的長期影響。

### 加強社區教育項目

- 加強計劃宣傳，呼籲公眾遇到婚姻問題時主動求助，以減少社會對求助行為的標籤效應。

- 繼續透過工作坊、小組、講座和短片等方式，進行有關婚姻和家庭關係議題的社區教育，並探索適當的策略來推廣教材。

### *促進各類服務提供機構的合作*

- 促進各類服務提供機構（包括政府部門、共親職服務、調解服務等）的合作，令服務使用者得以銜接各類所需服務，這對於為面臨婚姻困難的個人和夫婦提供全面支援至關重要。

### *增加對離婚決定輔導服務的資助*

- 政府可增加對離婚決定輔導服務的資助，以改善此類服務的質量。資助能夠幫助服務提供機構擴大服務範圍，並為面臨婚姻困難的夫妻制定專門的介入措施。



# Introduction

## Chapter One

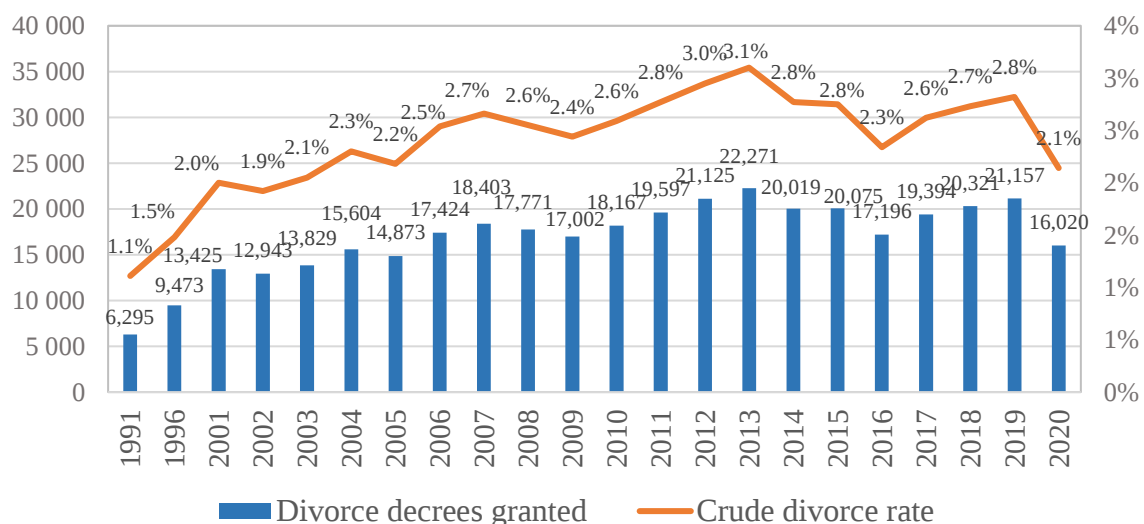
### 1.1 Research Background

#### *Divorce Trend in Hong Kong*

1.1.1 Divorce has become increasingly prevalent in Hong Kong over the past years. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2022), the number of divorce decrees granted increased significantly in the past three decades, from 6,295 in 1991 to 21,157 in 2019. Eliminating the effect of population growth, the crude divorce rate<sup>1</sup>, which relates to the number of divorce decrees granted to the mid-year population, also rose rapidly over the same period, from 1.11 per 1,000 population in 1991 to 2.82 in 2020.

1.1.2 In 2020, the number of divorces decreased remarkably to 16,020 and the crude divorce rate dropped to 2.14 per 1,000 population, possibly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Diagram 1.1.1: Number of divorce decrees granted and crude divorce rate in selected years*



<sup>1</sup> Crude divorce rate refers to the number of divorce decrees granted in a calendar year per 1,000 mid-year population of that year.

## *Risk Factors and Protective Factors of Divorce*

- 1.1.3 A comprehensive study was conducted in 2012 by the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong (2014) to investigate different aspects associated with the phenomenon of divorce in Hong Kong, including the demographic and socioeconomic patterns and the trend of divorce, the risk and protective factors, the impacts of divorce on the affected individuals and the needs of divorced families in Hong Kong. It was found that older individuals with families and children tended to be more cautious about filing for divorce. Moreover, unmet expectations for marriage, communication blocks, age gap between the couple, weak pre-marriage relationship, the adjustment of new parenthood, unreasonable behaviours, living with extended family members and financial problems, etc. could cause conflicts in the marriage, affecting the stability of married people's relationship. A further study in 2022, which was also conducted by the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong, indicated that other factors associated with divorce include spousal backgrounds (couple with different sociocultural backgrounds, long-distant relationships), the length of marriage, and the age of marriage.
- 1.1.4 However, the abovementioned studies had not adequately explored the protective factors of preserving the marriage. Studies pertaining to this issue in the local context of Hong Kong are rarely found. A recent study was carried out in 2019 (Karimi, Bakhtiyari & Masjedi Arani, 2019) to explore fundamental protective factors in long-term marriage through a systematic review. Some notable factors were identified and could be further classified as intrapersonal and interpersonal. Prominent intrapersonal factors include spirituality and religion, commitment to marriage, personality characteristics (e.g. gender, location, country), patience, being supportive, forgiveness, etc. and prominent interpersonal factors include constructive engagement, sexual relationship, role division, spending quality time, etc. Some aspects, such as the role of children and couples' financial issues, were beyond the intrapersonal and interpersonal components.

## *Further Understanding about Divorce Ideation*

- 1.1.5 There is a research gap in understanding the couples' thoughts about divorce in Hong Kong. A national study (The National Divorce Decision-Making Project, 2015) in the United States, conducted in 2015 can serve as a reference for the future study and services related to divorce in Hong Kong. This study surveyed 3,000 married individuals aged 25 to 50 in the United States to investigate the phenomenon of divorce ideation.
- 1.1.6 The study reveals that having divorce ideation is common. More than half (53.0%) of married individuals had ever thought about divorce in the past and majority of them (88.0%) felt glad that they were still together. Besides, a quarter (25.0%) of married individuals had recent thoughts about divorce in the last 6 months and slightly over half (53.0%) were "soft thinkers", whose thoughts were infrequent, and their marital problems were more amenable to repair efforts. These findings imply that divorce ideation does not straightforwardly lead to divorce actions.

- 1.1.7 Another noteworthy finding is that divorce ideation is dynamic. For example, 31.0% of respondents who were thinking about divorce at the first survey were not thinking about it a year later. And 52.0% of divorce thinkers at the first survey were in a different thinking or not thinking about divorce a year later. It reflects that divorce ideation does not necessarily mean that a divorce is inevitable.
- 1.1.8 Most recent divorce thinkers, both soft and serious, would like to stay in the marriage and fix their problems. It is found that patience, changed attitudes, and commitment appeared to be more common tools that respondents used to resolve their marital problems.

## 1.2 Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project

### *Organisation Background*

- 1.2.1 The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council (HKCMAC) is a unique non-governmental organisation specialising in supporting marriages and families. Incorporated in 1967, its mission is to promote lifelong marriages and happy families, according to Catholic principles, irrespective of creed or race.

### *Project Foci*

- 1.2.2 After consolidating experience in providing services for the separated and divorced couples in the past, the HKCMAC realised that it is very important to have an effective supportive service to prepare parents for a “divorce with soft landing” and safeguard the best interests of children being involved. The HKCMAC recognises an immediate need of pre-divorce services for the couples to contemplate separation, with the aims of rendering timely intervention amidst their marital crisis, enabling them to make a sensible choice and preparing them either to enhance couple relationship or to have mediation to prepare for co-parenting. On the other hand, to alleviate children’s stress when facing the dispute of their parents, the HKCMAC provides play counseling for them. Against the above background, Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project (hereafter “the Project”) is launched.
- 1.2.3 The target groups of the Project are couples with child/children on the verge of marital crisis and their child/children, professional staff and the public. The Project provides various kinds of contents for different target groups, including:
- Couples: Short-term marital review counseling and parental coaching services, workshops and parent-child groups.
  - Children: Play counseling and growth groups.
  - Professionals: Capacity building training and intervention.
  - Public: Community talk and educational materials, such as online videos<sup>2</sup>, about “Give Marriage a Chance”.

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<sup>2</sup> HKCMAC has delivered online videos covering various kinds of topics, including the introduction of the Project, marital communication skills, conflict resolution skills, impacts of marital conflicts / divorce on children, etc. via its YouTube channel: mmcs cmac).

## *Project Objectives*

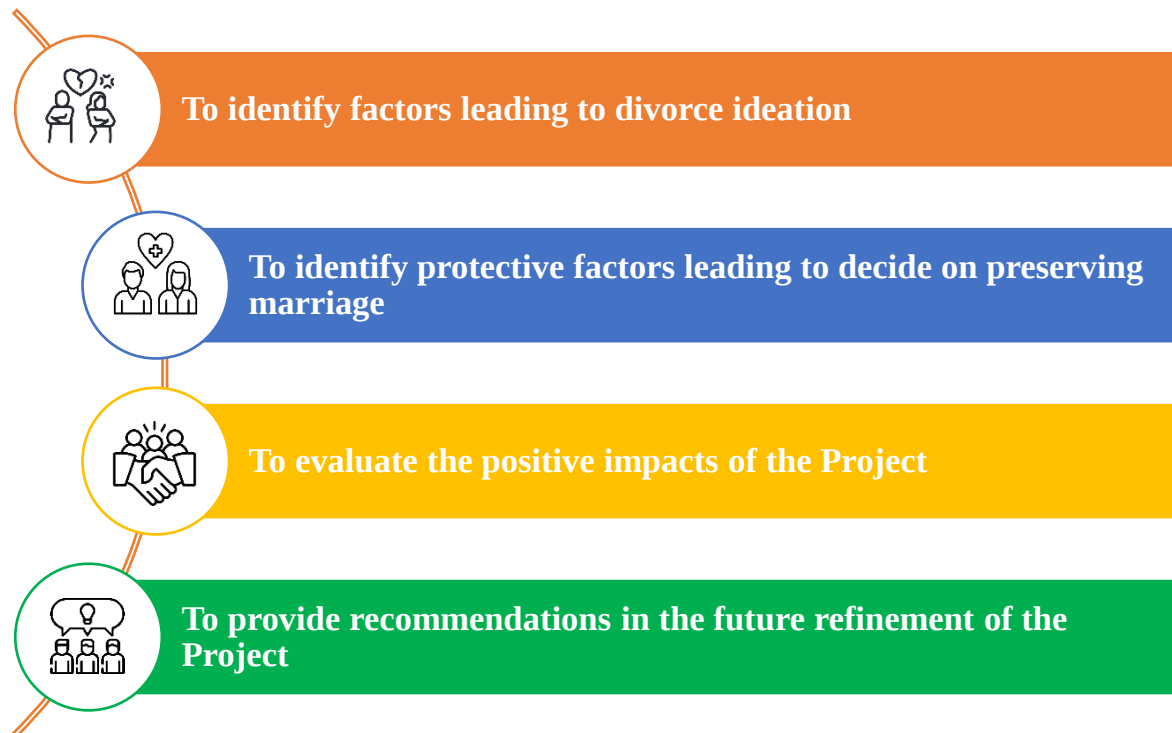
1.2.4 The main objectives of the Project are as follows:

- To support the couples with child/ children on the verge of marital crisis to have responsible and well-informed choice of the ways of handling their marital difficulties.
- To support children/ adolescents in facing family crisis and enhance parents' connection with their children in the midst of family crisis.
- To provide capacity building for professionals with the knowledge and skills of early intervention in helping couples on the verge of marital breakdown.
- To promote to the public the value of “Give Marriage a Chance” and the know-how of nourishing marital relationship.

## 1.3 Research Objectives

- 1.3.1 In order to evaluate the Project and provide more insights into the services, an Exploratory Study into the factors leading to divorce ideation and the protective factors of preserving marriage of the service services (“the Study”) was commissioned to the University of Hong Kong in 2022 and it was proposed to be conducted in 2023. The objectives of the Study are as follows:

*Diagram 1.3.1: Objectives of the Study*



## 1.4 Organisation of the Research Study Report

1.4.1 The following information is provided in this report:



### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

presents the background, the introduction of the Project and objectives of the study



### **Chapter 2: Research Methodology**

presents research methodology of the qualitative survey, questionnaire survey and document analysis



### **Chapter 3: Demographics of Service Users**

presents the demographic information of service users collected by case information forms



### **Chapter 4: Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation**

presents the factor leading to divorce ideation based on the results of in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and data collected from case information forms



### **Chapter 5: Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage**

presents the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage based on the results of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and data collected from case information forms



### **Chapter 6: Positive Impacts of the Project**

analyses the positive impacts of the Project based on the results of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire surveys



### **Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

presents conclusion of the findings and recommendations for the Project



# Research Methodology

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The study aims to explore the factors leading to divorce ideation, protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage, and the positive impacts of the Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project and provide insights into the service enhancement and share the study findings with multi-disciplinary professionals through research sharing seminar. The target respondents of the study include service users of the Project, and caseworkers who provided services in the Project.
- 2.1.2 To achieve the above aims, mixed data collection methods were adopted. Qualitative views were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and quantitative information was gathered by questionnaire surveys.

*Diagram 2.1.1: Overview of research methods*

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions</b></p> <p>In-depth interviews are conducted with service users and focus group discussions are conducted with caseworkers to obtain thorough understanding of the experience of couples with child(ren) on the verge of marital crisis and their views on the services of the Project.</p> |
|  | <p><b>Questionnaire Surveys</b></p> <p>Case Information Form, Evaluation Form of Counseling Services and Evaluation Form of Activities are designed to study service users’ demographics, factors for divorce ideation and service users’ views on the services of the Project.</p>                                                               |

## 2.2 In-depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion

### *Introduction*

- 2.2.1 In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative information using the same interview guideline and consent form so as to explore the factors leading to service users' divorce ideation, their perceived protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage, and also to evaluate the positive impacts of the Project from different aspects, including the experience of using the service, impacts on couples and children after receiving the service and service users' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the service. Also, a focus group discussion is carried out with caseworkers or counselors to gain an understanding of the abovementioned issues from a different perspective.
- 2.2.2 The interview guideline and focus group discussion guidelines were designed in consultation with the involved caseworkers or counselors during the focus group discussion and with reference to the Project materials.

### *Data Collection Methods*

- 2.2.3 In-depth interviews with service users were performed using face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews. To ensure the information collected was credible, researchers delivered a brief introduction to the service users and informed written consents were collected before the in-depth interviews. Interview conversations were audio-recorded for research purposes.
- 2.2.4 In total, 21 service users participated in the in-depth interviews from May 2023 to September 2023 to share their experiences of marriage and having divorce ideation and express their opinions on the services of the Project. The interview guideline is presented in **Annex I**.
- 2.2.5 Besides, a focus group discussion was conducted with 7 caseworkers or counselors to gain in-depth understanding of the Project, their observations on service users' experiences of having divorce ideation and their views on the services of the Project. The discussion guideline is presented in **Annex II**.
- 2.2.6 Conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions is very much different from questionnaire surveys. A discussion is not to seek a definitive response from individual respondents based on the sequence dictated by the interviewers' pre-designed structured or semi-structured questionnaire. Instead, the moderator's role in a discussion is to encourage participants' responses to a topic and elicit their thinking, attitudes, and ideas on the issue (Vaughan, 1996).
- 2.2.7 Thus, it is essential that the moderator should avoid, during the discussion, putting forward his own thinking on the subject matter, or trying to guide the group towards a direction, or worse still, conclusion. In summarising the findings of the discussion, the moderator should also avoid letting his own thinking on the subject matter affects the reporting. Indeed, some researchers even raised concern on possible biases introduced if the moderator shared the

professional culture of the discussants or an expert in the field under study (Twohig & Putnam, 2002).

2.2.8 The moderators of the in-depth interviews were drawn from members of the Research Team who have experience in conducting discussions. Research officers/ assistants from the Research Team were also be deployed to assist the moderators.

2.2.9 The following procedures were adopted in conducting the discussions:

- At the beginning of discussion, the moderator tried to warm up the group by going through the purposes of the discussion. The moderator ensured anonymity of opinions expressed by participants to encourage better response.
- Then the moderator proceeded to the list of issues to be raised for discussion. The moderator tried to start with the less threatening and more general ones and then proceed to the more specific, more difficult and controversial ones. The moderator tried to encourage discussion among the participants as far as possible.
- During discussion, the moderator ensured that the list of issues required to be discussed are covered in the discussion.
- At the end of the discussion, the moderator tried to re-confirm the views of different participants on the various issues raised during the discussion, to ensure that any changes of minds at the course of discussion would be reflected.

### *Data Analysis and Reporting*

2.2.10 A special team of indoor staff, who has many years of experience conducting research, were responsible for analysing the views collected from the discussions. Qualitative data analysis was conducted by members of the researchers with ample experience in social research and data analysis.

2.2.11 Thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the data collected from in-depth interviews. It is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting the meanings and trends presented by the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which can provide explanations for a specific theme in different aspects.

2.2.12 When using thematic analysis, the researcher can analyse the data from two approaches. The first approach is inductive that would not be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the area or topic. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. The second approach is a "theoretical" thematic analysis which would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven. This form of thematic analysis tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data.

- 2.2.13 In this Study, a “theoretical” thematic analysis was adopted as it aims to investigate three identified themes, including factors leading to divorce ideation, protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage and the positive impacts of the Project.
- 2.2.14 The 6-phase coding framework for thematic analysis was used to identify themes and patterns in the data. The phases include: (1) Familiarisation of data; (2) Generation of codes; (3) Combining codes into themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Determining significance of themes; and (6) Reporting of findings.

## 2.3 Evaluation Survey

### *Introduction*

- 2.3.1 Case Information Form (**Annex III**), Evaluation Form of Counseling Services (**Annex IV**), and Evaluation Form of Activities (one of the examples is in **Annex V**) are designed to collect quantitative data and coded qualitative data to study service users' backgrounds, experiences and their views on the services.

### *Data Collection Methods*

- 2.3.2 Case Information Form was administered by caseworkers after meeting with service users to gain a basic understanding of their demographics (such as gender, age, educational attainment, economic activity status, personal monthly income, years of residence in Hong Kong, number of children, etc.), experience of using marriage services, factors for divorce ideation, the marital status at the end of the case, etc.
- 2.3.3 Evaluation Form of Counseling Services was administered by caseworkers to ask for service users' responses after providing counseling service to them. Questions were set up to understand the perceived impacts of the counseling services on service users and the most impressive learnings gained by service users in the counseling service. In total, the responses from 166 parents and 44 children were collected.
- 2.3.4 Evaluation Form of Activities was a self-administered questionnaire which aims to capture the views of the service users on two major kinds of activities, including talks (such as “「家事調解及婚姻再思」專業服務介紹講座”, etc.) and groups (such as “「心心相印愛孩子」親子關係小組”, “「童情深」兒童小組”, “「愛與痛的邊緣」家長小組”, etc.). The items collected include service users' satisfaction with the activities, the helpfulness of the activities, and the knowledge and skills acquisition of the service users.

### *Quality Control Measures*

- 2.3.5 To ensure that data collected from the questionnaire surveys is credible, control measures before and after data collection were implemented. Before data collection, as the questionnaire surveys were mainly completed by the caseworkers and self-administered by service users, the caseworkers were briefed on the surveys' content and the appropriate methods to conduct the interviews before starting the surveys (e.g. minimising interference on the respondents).
- 2.3.6 After data collection, all completed questionnaires were first manually edited for completeness and internal consistency by an independent data editing team. Any errors found were immediately referred back to the interviewers for follow-up action. Data editing was carried out concurrently with field work.

## *Data Processing and Data Analysis*

- 2.3.7 Data analysis was conducted by researchers with ample experience in social research and data analysis. Standard computer packages such as SPSS 22.0 were used, in addition to tailored made programmes, if required.

## *Measures to Protect Data Confidentiality*

- 2.3.8 Every effort was made to protect confidentiality of data collected in the survey. Apart from a record identifier, no other information that may be used to identify the respondents was written on the questionnaires. Names of respondents were kept as brief as possible (e.g. including only the surname of the respondents).
- 2.3.9 In addition, data entered into the computer did not include the contact and personal identifiable information of the respondents. Instead, a record identifier was captured to facilitate sub-group analysis. After the survey data files have been successfully created in the computer, arrangement will be made to destroy the original questionnaires after project completion.

## **2.4 Limitations of the Study**

- 2.4.1 Despite the Research Team's efforts to obtain credible and comprehensive results of the studied issues, such as adopting mixed methods, recruiting respondents from diverse backgrounds, etc., there are still some limitations in the Study:
- Some of the findings of the Study were analysed based on the one-sided narratives of a marital crisis as the experiences of only one party (service users) of the couples involved were gathered, making it difficult to perform multiple data triangulation, such as inviting another party (service users' partners) to participate in the Study. Hence, the full picture of what happened when a marital crisis may not have been thoroughly understood. This limitation needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.
  - One of the beneficiaries of the Project is children. However, children were not invited to express their voice in the Study. There are two reasons for not including children's participation in the Study. The first reason is that the children involved in the Project might be too young to express their views with contemplation. The second reason is that the emotions of those children might be easily impacted, so careful and thorough preparation is required before interviewing them. Corresponding measures should be made to minimise the potential negative impacts on the interviewed children so their voice can be included in future studies.



# Demographics of Service Users

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Case Information Form (***Annex III***) was used in the Study to collect service users' socio-demographics (such as gender, age, educational attainment, economic activity status, personal monthly income, years of residence in Hong Kong, number of children, etc.), experience of using marriage services, factors leading to divorce ideation, the marital status at the end of the case, etc.

### 3.2 Socio-demographics

#### *Gender and Age*

- 3.2.1 In total, information of 153 service users (53 male service users and 100 female service users) with the case starting date from September 2021 to August 2023 were collected for further analysis. All of them are heterosexual.
- 3.2.2 Most of service users were within the age groups of 30 to 39 years old (38.6%) and 40 to 49 years old (42.5%). Other service users were within 50 to 59 years old (11.1%), 60 years old or above (3.3%) and 18 to 29 years old (1.3%). The average age of the service users was 41.0 years old.

*Table 3.2.1: Age groups of service users*

|                       | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|-----------------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                       | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| 18-29 years old       | 2   | 1.3%   | 0    | 0.0%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| 30-39 years old       | 59  | 38.6%  | 18   | 34.0%  | 41     | 41.0%  |
| 40-49 years old       | 65  | 42.5%  | 25   | 47.2%  | 40     | 40.0%  |
| 50-59 years old       | 17  | 11.1%  | 5    | 9.4%   | 12     | 12.0%  |
| 60 years old or above | 5   | 3.3%   | 2    | 3.8%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| No information        | 5   | 3.3%   | 3    | 5.7%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>          | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

- 3.2.3 As reported by the service users, most of their spouses fell within the age groups of 30-39 years old (35.9%) and 40-49 years old (34.0%), followed by 50-59 years old (17.6%), 60 years old or above (6.5%) and 18-29 years old (1.3%), similar with the service users. The average age of the service users was 43.6 years old.

*Table 3.2.2: Age groups of service users' spouses*

|                       | All        |               | Male       |               | Female    |               |
|-----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                       | N          | %             | N          | %             | N         | %             |
| 18-29 years old       | 2          | 1.3%          | 2          | 2.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          |
| 30-39 years old       | 55         | 35.9%         | 28         | 28.0%         | 27        | 50.9%         |
| 40-49 years old       | 52         | 34.0%         | 37         | 37.0%         | 15        | 28.3%         |
| 50-59 years old       | 27         | 17.6%         | 20         | 20.0%         | 7         | 13.2%         |
| 60 years old or above | 10         | 6.5%          | 9          | 9.0%          | 1         | 1.9%          |
| No information        | 7          | 4.6%          | 4          | 4.0%          | 3         | 5.7%          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

### *Educational Attainment*

- 3.2.4 In terms of educational attainment, more than half (54.2%) of the service users achieved degree or above, following by secondary school (32.0%), diploma / sub-degree (11.1%) and primary school or below (0.7%).

*Table 3.2.3: Educational attainment of service users*

|                         | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                         | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| Primary school or below | 1          | 0.7%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| Secondary school        | 49         | 32.0%         | 19        | 35.8%         | 30         | 30.0%         |
| Diploma / Sub-degree    | 17         | 11.1%         | 6         | 11.3%         | 11         | 11.0%         |
| Degree or above         | 83         | 54.2%         | 26        | 49.1%         | 57         | 57.0%         |
| No information          | 3          | 2.0%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.2.5 Similarly, more than half (52.3%) of the service users attained degree or above, following by secondary school (29.4%), diploma / sub-degree (11.8%) and primary school or below (2.0%).

*Table 3.2.4: Educational attainment of service users' spouses*

|                         | All        |               | Male       |               | Female    |               |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                         | N          | %             | N          | %             | N         | %             |
| Primary school or below | 3          | 2.0%          | 3          | 3.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          |
| Secondary school        | 45         | 29.4%         | 32         | 32.0%         | 13        | 24.5%         |
| Diploma/ Sub-degree     | 18         | 11.8%         | 10         | 10.0%         | 8         | 15.1%         |
| Degree or above         | 80         | 52.3%         | 51         | 51.0%         | 29        | 54.7%         |
| No information          | 7          | 4.6%          | 4          | 4.0%          | 3         | 5.7%          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

## Economic Activity Status

- 3.2.6 Regarding the economic activity status, the majority of the service users (68.0%) were employees, following by homemaker (18.3%), employer/ self-employed (7.2%), unemployed (1.3%) and retired (1.3%). Analysed by gender, significantly more male service users (81.1%) than female service users (61.0%) were employees while only female service users were homemakers (28.0%).

Table 3.2.5: Economic activity status of service users

|                         | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                         | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| Employee                | 104        | 68.0%         | 43        | 81.1%         | 61         | 61.0%         |
| Employer/ Self-employed | 11         | 7.2%          | 6         | 11.3%         | 5          | 5.0%          |
| Homemaker               | 28         | 18.3%         | 0         | 0.0%          | 28         | 28.0%         |
| Unemployed              | 2          | 1.3%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 2          | 2.0%          |
| Student                 | 0          | 0.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 0          | 0.0%          |
| Retired                 | 2          | 1.3%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 2          | 2.0%          |
| No information          | 6          | 3.9%          | 4         | 7.5%          | 2          | 2.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.2.7 Similar to the service users, their spouses were employees (68.0%), following by employer/ self-employed (12.4%), homemaker (7.2%), unemployed (3.3%), retired (2.6%) and student (0.7%).

Table 3.2.6: Economic activity status of service users' spouses

|                         | All        |               | Male       |               | Female    |               |
|-------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                         | N          | %             | N          | %             | N         | %             |
| Employee                | 104        | 68.0%         | 70         | 70.0%         | 34        | 64.2%         |
| Employer/ Self-employed | 19         | 12.4%         | 17         | 17.0%         | 2         | 3.8%          |
| Homemaker               | 11         | 7.2%          | 0          | 0.0%          | 11        | 20.8%         |
| Unemployed              | 5          | 3.3%          | 5          | 5.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          |
| Student                 | 1          | 0.7%          | 1          | 1.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          |
| Retired                 | 4          | 2.6%          | 4          | 4.0%          | 0         | 0.0%          |
| No information          | 9          | 5.9%          | 3          | 3.0%          | 6         | 11.3%         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

## Personal Monthly Income

- 3.2.8 In terms of personal monthly income, 36.6% of the service users had a personal income of \$30,000 or above per month, followed by \$20,000-\$29,999 (21.6%), no income (20.9%), \$10,000-\$19,999 (15.0%), and \$10,000 or below (2.6%). Analysed by gender, significantly more male service users (52.8%) than female service users (28.0%) earned \$30,000 or above per month while only female service users fell within the group of No income, accounting for almost one third (32.0%) of the sample size.

Table 3.2.7: Personal monthly income of service users

|                   | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                   | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| No income         | 32         | 20.9%         | 0         | 0.0%          | 32         | 32.0%         |
| \$10,000 or below | 4          | 2.6%          | 1         | 1.9%          | 3          | 3.0%          |
| \$10,000-\$19,999 | 23         | 15.0%         | 8         | 15.1%         | 15         | 15.0%         |
| \$20,000-\$29,999 | 33         | 21.6%         | 13        | 24.5%         | 20         | 20.0%         |
| \$30,000 or above | 56         | 36.6%         | 28        | 52.8%         | 28         | 28.0%         |
| No information    | 5          | 3.3%          | 3         | 5.7%          | 2          | 2.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.2.9 43.8% of the service users' spouses had a personal income of \$30,000 or above per month, followed by \$20,000-\$29,999 (17.6%), no income (13.7%), \$10,000-\$19,999 (12.4%), and \$10,000 or below (4.6%).

Table 3.2.8: Personal monthly income of service users' spouses

|                   | All        |               | Male       |               | Female    |               |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                   | N          | %             | N          | %             | N         | %             |
| No income         | 21         | 13.7%         | 9          | 9.0%          | 12        | 22.6%         |
| \$10,000 or below | 7          | 4.6%          | 2          | 2.0%          | 5         | 9.4%          |
| \$10,000-\$19,999 | 19         | 12.4%         | 15         | 15.0%         | 4         | 7.5%          |
| \$20,000-\$29,999 | 27         | 17.6%         | 20         | 20.0%         | 7         | 13.2%         |
| \$30,000 or above | 67         | 43.8%         | 49         | 49.0%         | 18        | 34.0%         |
| No information    | 10         | 7.8%          | 5          | 5.0%          | 7         | 13.2%         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

### *Year of Residence in Hong Kong*

- 3.2.10 Regarding the years of residence in Hong Kong, majority (73.9%) of the service users were born in Hong Kong. 20.9% were not born in Hong Kong but had lived in Hong Kong for 7 years. 3.3% had lived in Hong Kong for less than 7 years.

Table 3.2.9: Service users' year of residence in Hong Kong

|                                                           | All        |               | Male      |               | Female    |               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                                                           | N          | %             | N         | %             | N         | %             |
| Since birth                                               | 113        | 73.9%         | 39        | 73.6%         | 74        | 74.0%         |
| Not born in Hong Kong, but have lived for 7 years or more | 32         | 20.9%         | 12        | 22.6%         | 20        | 20.0%         |
| Have lived in Hong Kong for less than 7 years             | 5          | 3.3%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 5         | 5.0%          |
| No information                                            | 3          | 2.0%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 1         | 1.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>                                              | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.2.11 Majority (74.5%) of the service users' spouses were born in Hong Kong. 17.0% were not born in Hong Kong but had lived in Hong Kong for 7 years. 3.9% had lived in Hong Kong for less than 7 years.

*Table 3.2.10: Service users' spouses' year of residence in Hong Kong*

|                                                           | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                                           | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Since birth                                               | 114 | 74.5%  | 78   | 78.0%  | 36     | 67.9%  |
| Not born in Hong Kong, but have lived for 7 years or more | 26  | 17.0%  | 15   | 15.0%  | 11     | 20.8%  |
| Have lived in Hong Kong for less than 7 years             | 6   | 3.9%   | 4    | 4.0%   | 2      | 3.8%   |
| No information                                            | 7   | 4.6%   | 3    | 3.0%   | 4      | 7.5%   |
| <b>Total</b>                                              | 153 | 100.0% | 100  | 100.0% | 53     | 100.0% |

### *Religious Beliefs*

- 3.2.12 Regarding religious beliefs, slightly more than a quarter (28.8%) of the service users had religious beliefs.

*Table 3.2.11: Whether service users have religious beliefs*

|                | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|----------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Yes            | 44  | 28.8%  | 15   | 28.3%  | 29     | 29.0%  |
| No             | 102 | 66.7%  | 34   | 64.2%  | 68     | 68.0%  |
| No information | 7   | 4.6%   | 4    | 7.5%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

- 3.2.13 On the other hand, only 19.6% of the service users' spouses had religious beliefs.

*Table 3.2.12: Whether service users' spouses have religious beliefs*

|                | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|----------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Yes            | 30  | 19.6%  | 19   | 19.0%  | 11     | 20.8%  |
| No             | 112 | 73.2%  | 75   | 75.0%  | 37     | 69.8%  |
| No information | 11  | 7.2%   | 6    | 6.0%   | 5      | 9.4%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | 153 | 100.0% | 100  | 100.0% | 53     | 100.0% |

### 3.3 Marriage and Family

#### *Age of Getting Married*

- 3.3.1 Considering the age of getting married, the majority of the service users were married at either 25-29 years old (39.2%) or 30-34 years old (35.3%), followed by 18-24 years old (11.1%), 35-39 years old (9.2%), 45-49 years old (1.3%) and 40-44 years old (0.7%). Analysed by gender, a significantly higher proportion of the female service users (16.0%) than the male service users (1.9%) were married at 18-24 years old. Service users' average age of getting married was 29.4 years old.

*Table 3.3.1: Service users' age of getting married*

|                 | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|-----------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| 18-24 years old | 17  | 11.1%  | 1    | 1.9%   | 16     | 16.0%  |
| 25-29 years old | 60  | 39.2%  | 18   | 34.0%  | 42     | 42.0%  |
| 30-34 years old | 54  | 35.3%  | 21   | 39.6%  | 33     | 33.0%  |
| 35-39 years old | 14  | 9.2%   | 8    | 15.1%  | 6      | 6.0%   |
| 40-44 years old | 1   | 0.7%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 0      | 0.0%   |
| 45-49 years old | 2   | 1.3%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 1      | 1.0%   |
| No information  | 5   | 3.3%   | 3    | 5.7%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>    | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

- 3.3.2 Majority of the service users' spouses were married by either at 25-29 years old (37.3%) or 30-34 years old (34.0%), followed by 35-39 years old (8.5%), 18-24 years old (7.2%), 40-44 years old (5.2%), 50-54 years old (2.0%), and 45-49 years old (1.3%). Spouses' average age of getting married was 30.9 years old.

*Table 3.3.2: Service users' spouses' age of getting married*

|                 | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|-----------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| 18-24 years old | 11  | 7.2%   | 8    | 8.0%   | 3      | 5.7%   |
| 25-29 years old | 57  | 37.3%  | 33   | 33.0%  | 24     | 45.3%  |
| 30-34 years old | 52  | 34.0%  | 31   | 31.0%  | 21     | 39.6%  |
| 35-39 years old | 13  | 8.5%   | 12   | 12.0%  | 1      | 1.9%   |
| 40-44 years old | 8   | 5.2%   | 7    | 7.0%   | 1      | 1.9%   |
| 45-49 years old | 2   | 1.3%   | 2    | 2.0%   | 0      | 0.0%   |
| No information  | 3   | 2.0%   | 3    | 3.0%   | 0      | 0.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>    | 153 | 100.0% | 100  | 100.0% | 53     | 100.0% |

### *Number of Family Members*

- 3.3.3 The majority of the service users lived in a family of 4 persons (43.8%) and a family of 3 persons (41.8%). Besides, 9.2% of service users lived in a family of 5 persons.

*Table 3.3.3: Number of family members of service users*

|                | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|----------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| 1 person       | 1   | 0.7%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 0      | 0.0%   |
| 2 persons      | 4   | 2.6%   | 2    | 3.8%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| 3 persons      | 64  | 41.8%  | 20   | 37.7%  | 44     | 44.0%  |
| 4 persons      | 67  | 43.8%  | 23   | 43.4%  | 44     | 44.0%  |
| 5 persons      | 14  | 9.2%   | 6    | 11.3%  | 8      | 8.0%   |
| 6 persons      | 1   | 0.7%   | 0    | 0.0%   | 1      | 1.0%   |
| No information | 2   | 1.3%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 1      | 1.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>   | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

### *District of Residence*

- 3.3.4 In terms of district of residence, the top 3 districts lived by the service users were Sha Tin District (13.7%), Kwun Tong District (12.4%) and Kowloon City District (8.5%).

*Table 3.3.4: District of residence of service users*

|                              | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|------------------------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                              | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Central and Western District | 8   | 5.2%   | 3    | 5.7%   | 5      | 5.0%   |
| Wan Chai District            | 9   | 5.9%   | 3    | 5.7%   | 6      | 6.0%   |
| Eastern District             | 4   | 2.6%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| Southern District            | 3   | 2.0%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| Sham Shui Po District        | 3   | 2.0%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 2      | 2.0%   |
| Yau Tsim Mong District       | 8   | 5.2%   | 2    | 3.8%   | 6      | 6.0%   |
| Kowloon City District        | 13  | 8.5%   | 6    | 11.3%  | 7      | 7.0%   |
| Wong Tai Sin District        | 11  | 7.2%   | 5    | 9.4%   | 6      | 6.0%   |
| Kwun Tong District           | 19  | 12.4%  | 9    | 17.0%  | 10     | 10.0%  |
| Kwai Tsing District          | 4   | 2.6%   | 0    | 0.0%   | 4      | 4.0%   |
| Tsuen Wan District           | 8   | 5.2%   | 5    | 9.4%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| Tuen Mun District            | 5   | 3.3%   | 2    | 3.8%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| Yuen Long District           | 6   | 3.9%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 5      | 5.0%   |
| North District               | 3   | 2.0%   | 0    | 0.0%   | 3      | 3.0%   |
| Tai Po District              | 8   | 5.2%   | 3    | 5.7%   | 5      | 5.0%   |
| Sha Tin District             | 21  | 13.7%  | 4    | 7.5%   | 17     | 17.0%  |
| Sai Kung District            | 12  | 7.8%   | 5    | 9.4%   | 7      | 7.0%   |
| Islands District             | 1   | 0.7%   | 0    | 0.0%   | 1      | 1.0%   |
| No information               | 7   | 4.6%   | 2    | 3.8%   | 5      | 5.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

### *Duration of Premarital Relationship*

- 3.3.5 In terms of duration of premarital relationship, 44.4% of the service users indicated that they had a premarital relationship with spouses for 2 to 3 years. 13.1% of the service users had a premarital relationship for 4 to 6 years, followed by 1 year or less (11.1%), 7 to 9 years (5.9%), and 10 years or more (4.6%). Only 1 female service user had used premarital counseling services.

*Table 3.3.5: Duration of premarital relationship and whether service users have used premarital counseling services*

|                                                                           | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                                                                           | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| <b>Duration of Premarital Relationship</b>                                |            |               |           |               |            |               |
| 1 year or less                                                            | 17         | 11.1%         | 4         | 7.5%          | 13         | 13.0%         |
| 2 to 3 years                                                              | 68         | 44.4%         | 24        | 45.3%         | 44         | 44.0%         |
| 4 to 6 years                                                              | 20         | 13.1%         | 9         | 17.0%         | 11         | 11.0%         |
| 7 to 9 years                                                              | 9          | 5.9%          | 3         | 5.7%          | 6          | 6.0%          |
| 10 years or more                                                          | 7          | 4.6%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 5          | 5.0%          |
| No information                                                            | 32         | 20.9%         | 11        | 20.8%         | 21         | 21.0%         |
| <b>Whether the service users have used premarital counseling services</b> |            |               |           |               |            |               |
| Yes                                                                       | 1          | 0.7%          | 0         | 0.0%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| No                                                                        | 102        | 66.7%         | 32        | 60.4%         | 70         | 70.0%         |
| No information                                                            | 50         | 32.7%         | 21        | 39.6%         | 29         | 29.0%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                                              | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

### *Having Children*

- 3.3.6 The service users were asked whether they had children. The vast majority (96.1%) of them had children with their spouses.

*Table 3.3.6: Whether the service users have children with their spouses*

|                | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|----------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| Yes            | 147        | 96.1%         | 49        | 92.5%         | 98         | 98.0%         |
| No             | 3          | 2.0%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| No information | 3          | 2.0%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.3.7 Among those service users who had children, 46.3% of them had 1 child and 44.2% had 2 children. Besides, 8.2% of them had 3 children and only 0.7% had 4 children.

*Table 3.3.7: Number of Child(ren) that service users have*

|                             | <b>All</b> |               |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|
|                             | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>      |
| <b>Number of Child(ren)</b> |            |               |
| 1                           | 68         | 46.3%         |
| 2                           | 65         | 44.2%         |
| 3                           | 12         | 8.2%          |
| 4                           | 1          | 0.7%          |
| No information              | 1          | 0.7%          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>147</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

### *Living with Family*

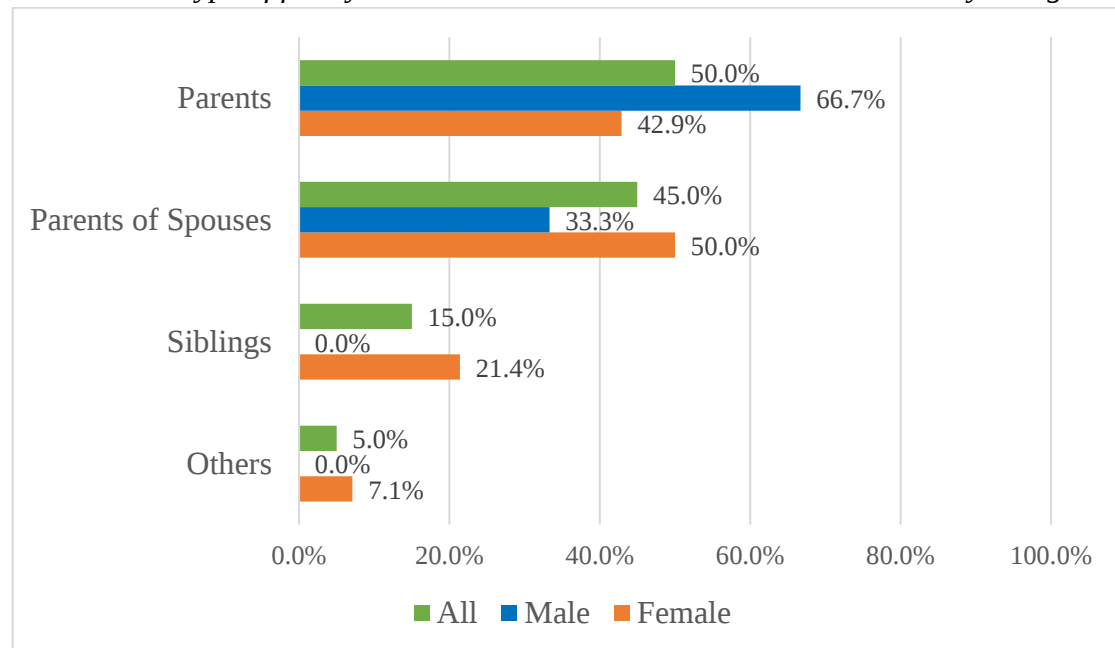
- 3.3.8 The service users were asked whether they lived with their own and/or their spouses' family members. The majority (74.5%) of the service users only live with their spouses, child(ren) and/ or domestic helpers. 13.1% of them currently lived with their or their spouses' family members while 8.5% had only once lived with them.

*Table 3.3.8: Whether the service users live with their own and/or their spouses' family members*

|                                                                           | <b>All</b> |               | <b>Male</b> |               | <b>Female</b> |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                                                           | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>      | <b>N</b>    | <b>%</b>      | <b>N</b>      | <b>%</b>      |
| Only live with spouses, child(ren) and/ or domestic helper                | 114        | 74.5%         | 38          | 71.7%         | 76            | 76.0%         |
| Currently living with service users and/ or their spouses' family members | 20         | 13.1%         | 6           | 11.3%         | 14            | 14.0%         |
| Have once lived with service users and/ or their spouses' family members  | 13         | 8.5%          | 7           | 13.2%         | 6             | 6.0%          |
| No information                                                            | 6          | 3.9%          | 2           | 3.8%          | 4             | 4.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                              | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b>   | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b>    | <b>100.0%</b> |

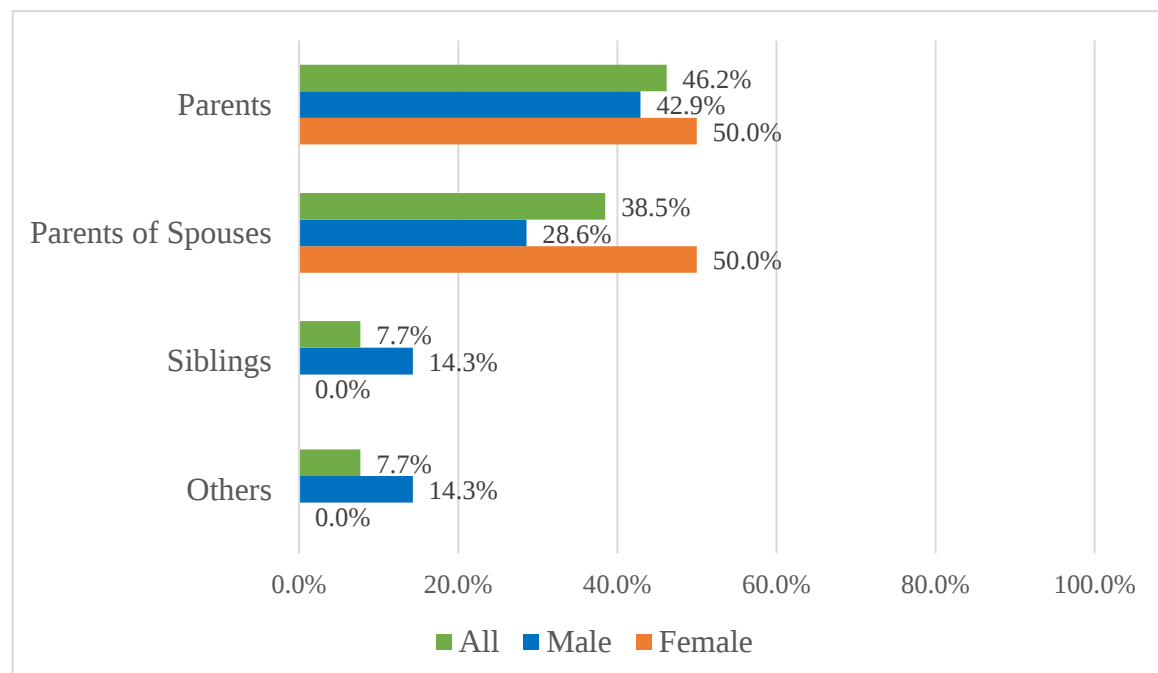
- 3.3.9 Of the service users who currently lived with their and/or their spouses' family members, half of them (50.0%) lived with their parents, followed by parents of their spouses (45.0%), siblings (15.0%), and other family members (5.0%).

*Chart 3.3.9: Type of family members with whom service users are currently living*



- 3.3.10 Of the service users who had once lived with their and/or their spouses' family members, 46.2% of them lived with their parents, followed by parents of their spouses (38.5%), siblings (7.7%), and other family members (7.7%).

*Chart 3.3.10: Type of family members with whom service users have once lived with*



## History of Divorce among Family Members and Friends

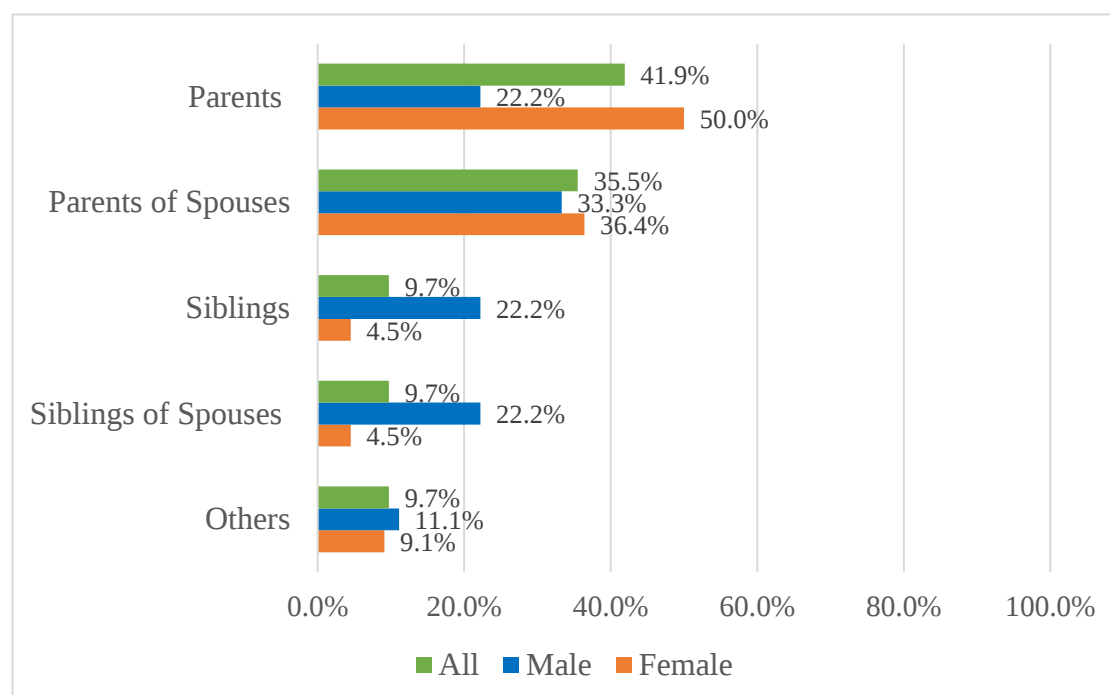
- 3.3.11 The service users were asked whether they had family members who had divorced. 20.3% of them indicated that they had family members who had divorced before while 32.7% did not. 45.1% of service users expressed that they did not know.

Table 3.3.11: Whether the service users have family members who have divorced

|                | All        |               | Male      |               | Female     |               |
|----------------|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                | N          | %             | N         | %             | N          | %             |
| Yes            | 31         | 20.3%         | 9         | 17.0%         | 22         | 22.0%         |
| No             | 50         | 32.7%         | 19        | 35.8%         | 31         | 31.0%         |
| Do not know    | 69         | 45.1%         | 23        | 43.4%         | 46         | 46.0%         |
| No information | 3          | 2.0%          | 2         | 3.8%          | 1          | 1.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 3.3.12 Of the service users who had divorced family members, 41.9% of them said that the family members were parents, followed by parents of spouses (35.5%), siblings (9.7%), siblings of spouses (9.7%) and other family members (9.7%).

Chart 3.3.12: Type of family members who have divorced



- 3.3.13 The service users were asked whether they had friends who had divorced. 8.5% of them indicated that they had friends who had divorced before while 1.3% did not. The majority (88.9%) of the service users expressed that they did not know.

*Table 3.3.13: Whether the service users have friends who have divorced*

|                | <b>All</b> |               | <b>Male</b> |               | <b>Female</b> |               |
|----------------|------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|                | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>      | <b>N</b>    | <b>%</b>      | <b>N</b>      | <b>%</b>      |
| Yes            | 13         | 8.5%          | 7           | 13.2%         | 6             | 6.0%          |
| No             | 2          | 1.3%          | 0           | 0.0%          | 2             | 2.0%          |
| Do not know    | 136        | 88.9%         | 45          | 84.9%         | 91            | 91.0%         |
| No information | 2          | 1.3%          | 1           | 1.9%          | 1             | 1.0%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>153</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>53</b>   | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>100</b>    | <b>100.0%</b> |

## 3.4 Current Situation of Service Users

### *Application of Services*

- 3.4.1 44.4% of the service users reported that both parties applied for the services and involved in the services. 28.1% indicated that only one party applied for the services and both parties involved in the services. 26.1% said that only one party applied for the services and involved in the services.

*Table 3.4.1: Application of Divorce and Involvement of Divorce Procedures*

|                                                                                   | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                                                                   | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Only one party applied for the services and involved in the services              | 40  | 26.1%  | 12   | 22.6%  | 28     | 28.0%  |
| Only one party applied for the services and both parties involved in the services | 43  | 28.1%  | 16   | 30.2%  | 27     | 27.0%  |
| Both parties applied for the services and involved in the services                | 68  | 44.4%  | 24   | 45.3%  | 44     | 44.0%  |
| No information                                                                    | 2   | 1.3%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 1      | 1.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                      | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

- 3.4.2 The majority (80.4%) of the service users expressed that they found the services on their own while the remaining 19.0% were referred by professionals, such as caseworkers, counselors, teachers, etc.

*Table 3.4.2: Referral source of the service users*

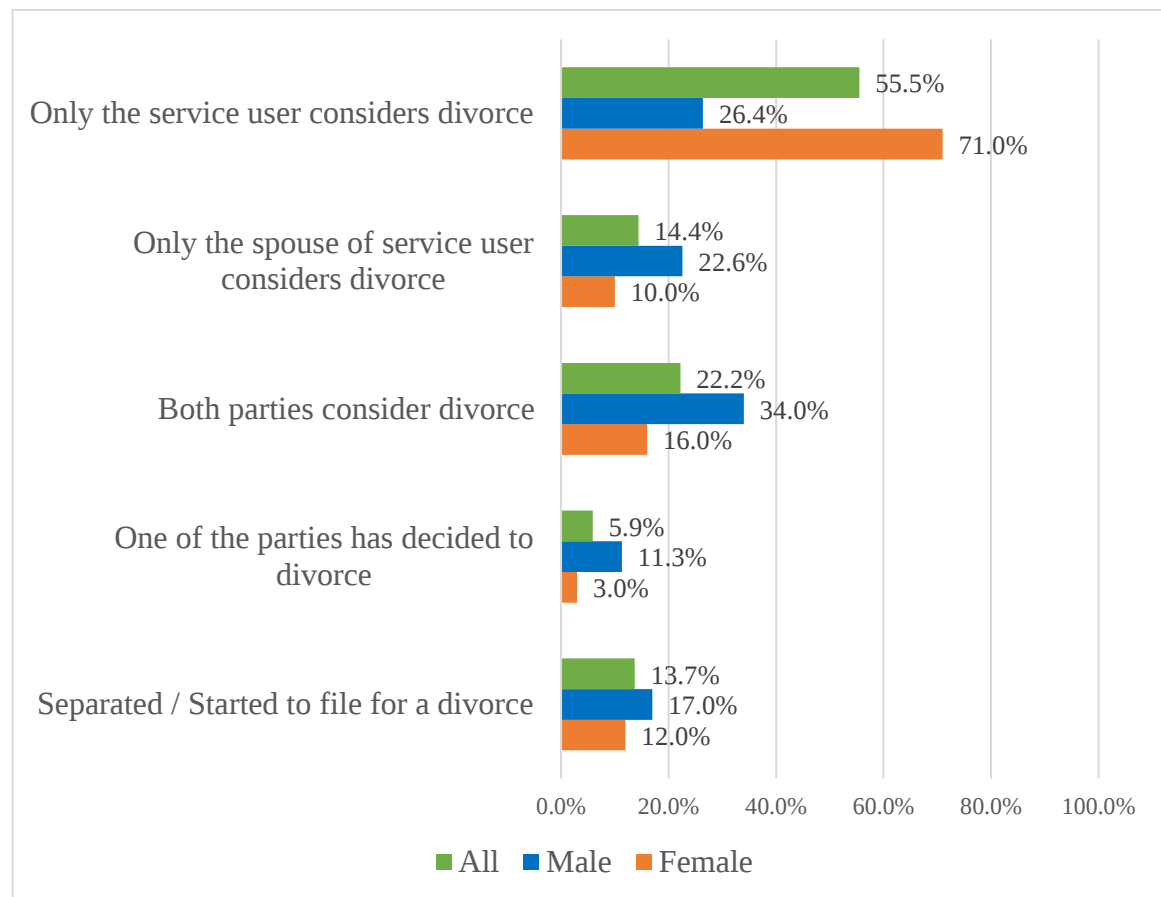
|                            | All |        | Male |        | Female |        |
|----------------------------|-----|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                            | N   | %      | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Referrals of professionals | 29  | 19.0%  | 12   | 22.6%  | 17     | 17.0%  |
| Seek help on his/her own   | 123 | 80.4%  | 40   | 75.5%  | 83     | 83.0%  |
| No information             | 1   | 0.7%   | 1    | 1.9%   | 0      | 0.0%   |
| <b>Total</b>               | 153 | 100.0% | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

### *Situations of Divorce*

- 3.4.3 Regarding the situations of divorce, more than half (55.5%) of the service users stated that they alone had considered divorce. Analysed by gender, the proportion of the female service users (71.0%) who considered divorce was significantly higher than that of the male service users (26.4%).
- 3.4.4 14.4% of the service users claimed that only their spouses considered divorce. Analysed by gender, the proportion of the male service users whose spouses considered divorce (22.6%) was significantly higher than that of the female service users (10.0%).

- 3.4.5 22.2% of the service users informed that both of them and their spouses considered divorce. Analysed by gender, the proportion of the male service users expressing that both they and their spouses considered filing for a divorce (34.0%) was significantly higher than that of the female service users (16.0%).
- 3.4.6 Besides, 5.9% of the service users indicated that either they or their spouses had decided to divorce and 13.7% of the service users said that they had separated or started to file for a divorce.

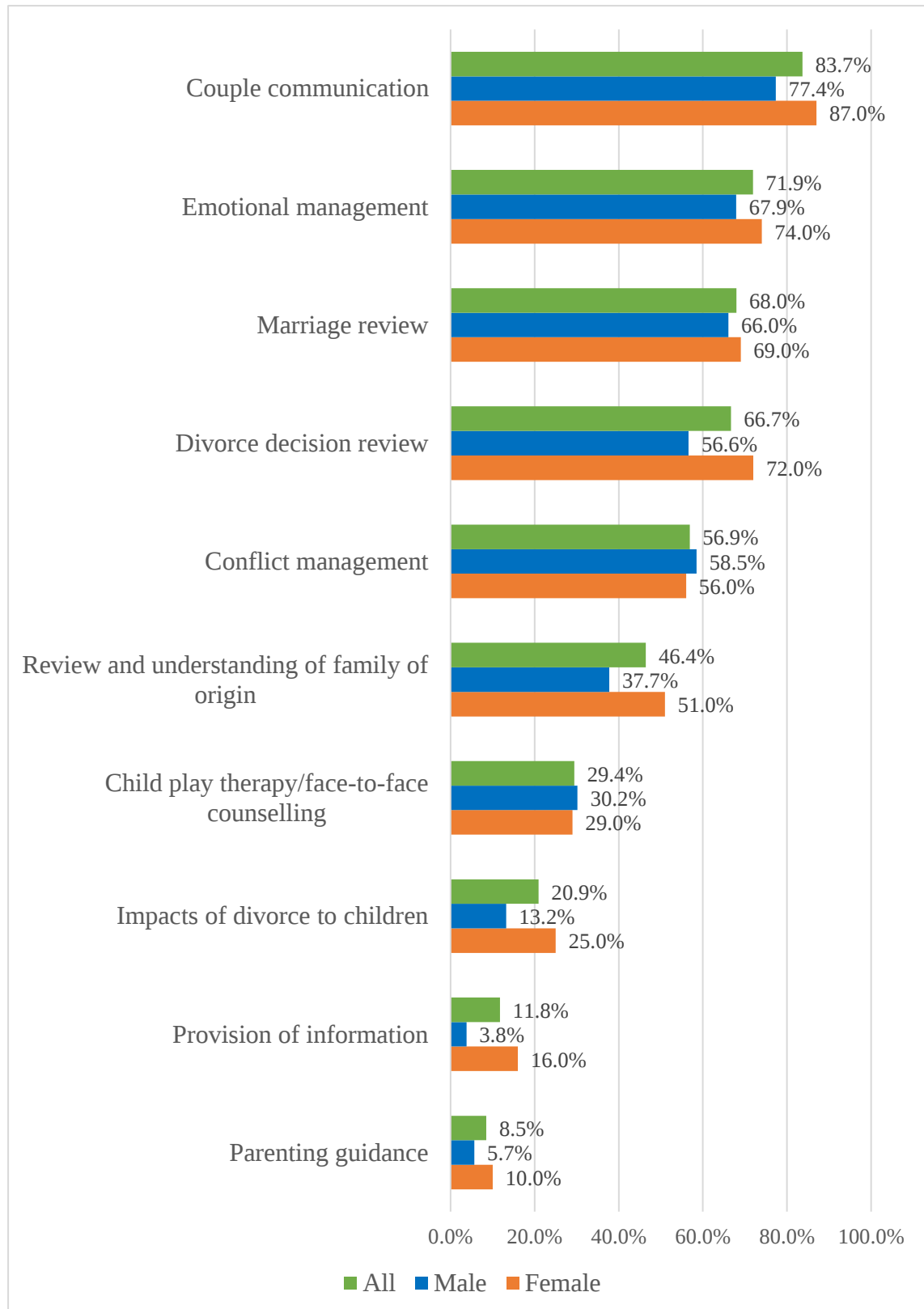
*Diagram 3.4.3: Service users' situations of divorce*



### *Areas of Case Counseling Services*

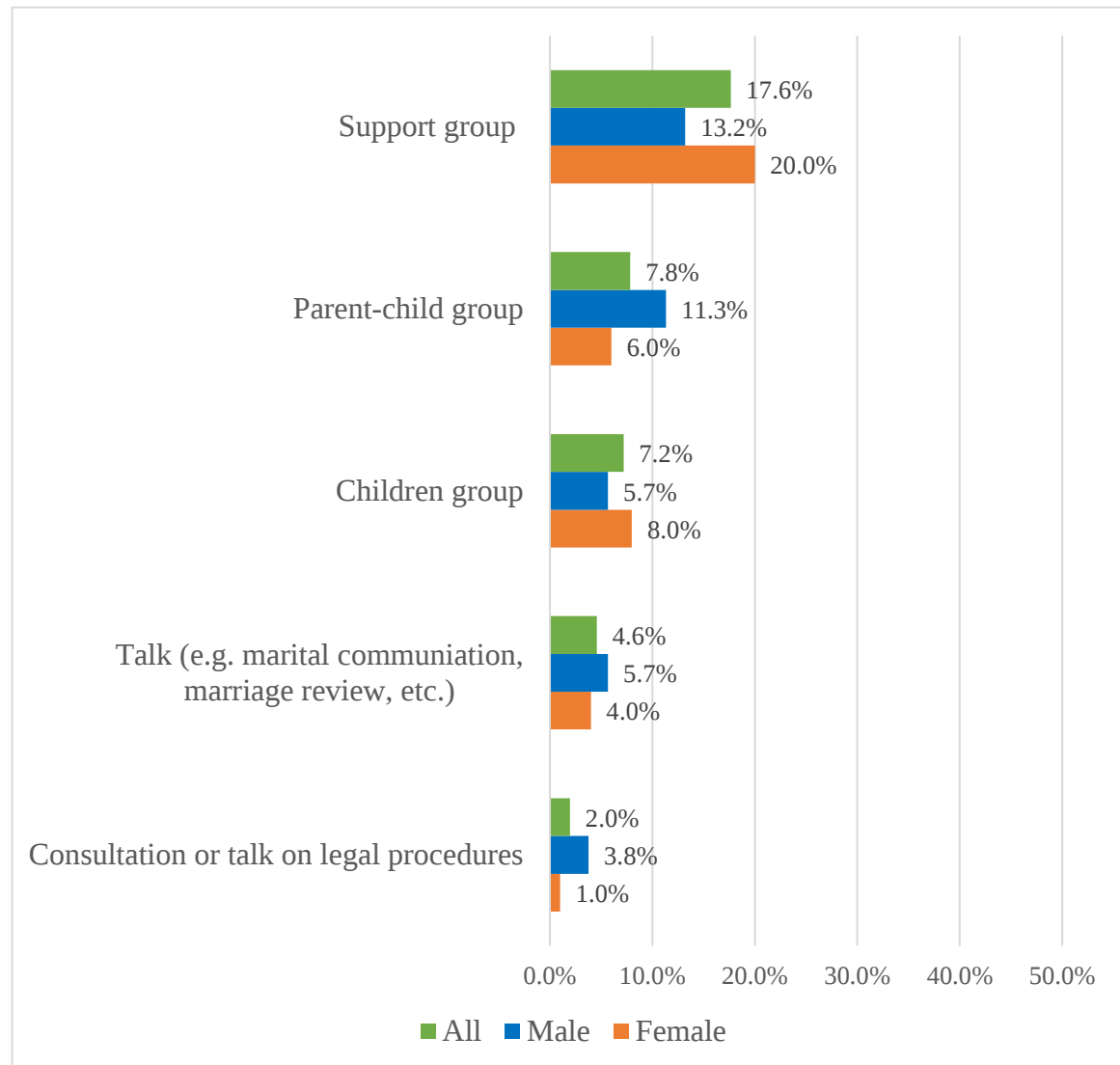
- 3.4.7 Areas of case counseling services are recorded in the Case Information Form. The majority (83.7%) of service users had received couple communication. Other contents included emotional management (71.9%), marriage review (68.0%), divorce decision review (66.7%), and conflict management (56.9%).

Diagram 3.4.4: Areas of case counseling services received by service users



3.4.8 Regarding the service users' participation in groups and talks, 17.6% of service users engaged in the support group. Other services in which the service users participated included parent-child group (7.8%), children group (7.2%), talk (e.g. couple communication, marriage review) (4.6%), and consultation or talk on legal procedures (2.0%).

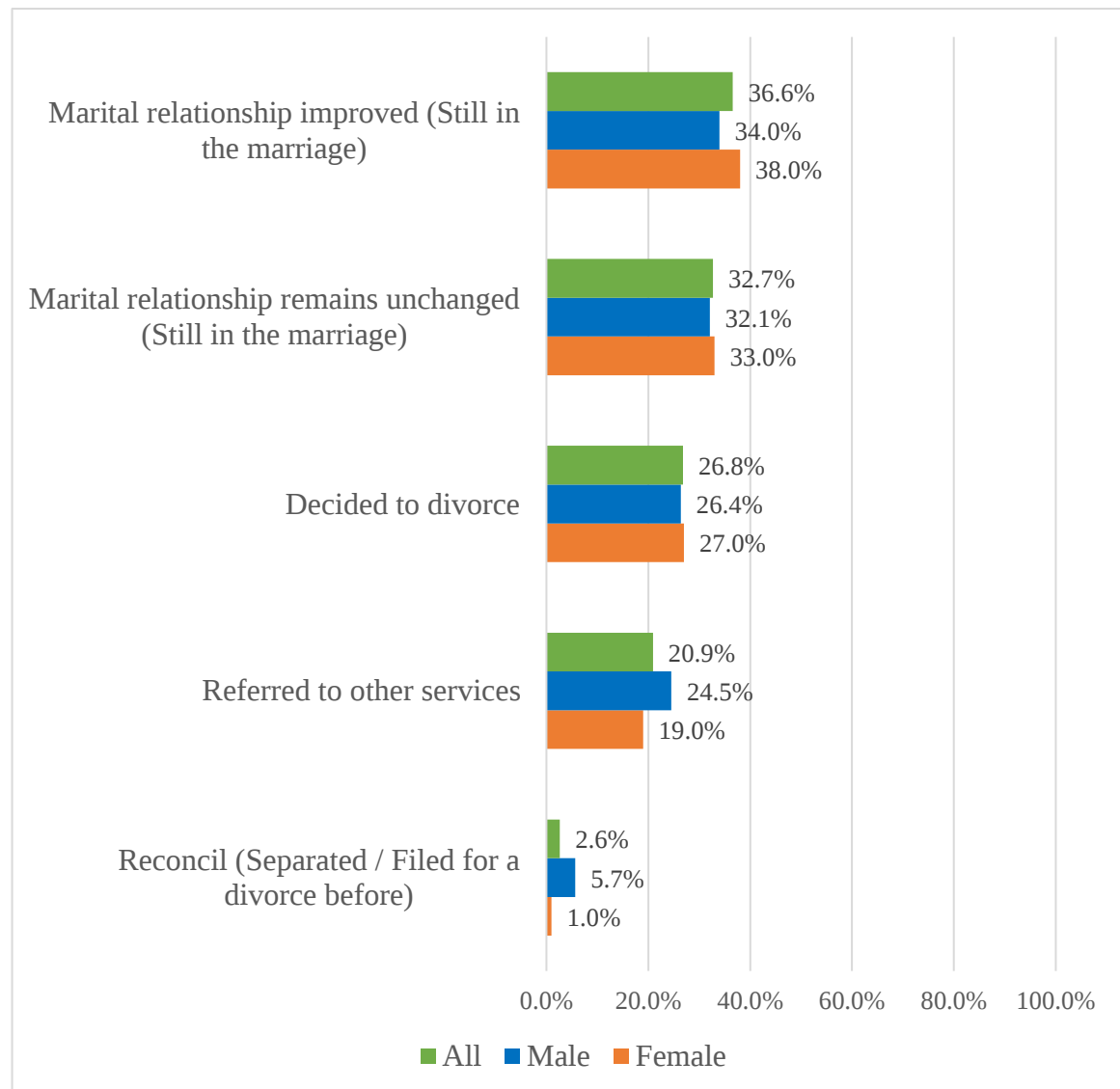
*Diagram 3.4.5: Groups and talk services in which service users engage*



3.4.9 The marital status of the service users and their spouses at the end of the case varied. 36.6% of the service users expressed that they were still in the marriage and their marital relationships with spouses improved. 32.7% of the service users indicated that they were still in the marriage with unchanged relationships with spouses. 2.6% of the service users, who had separated or filed for a divorce before, decided to reconcile.

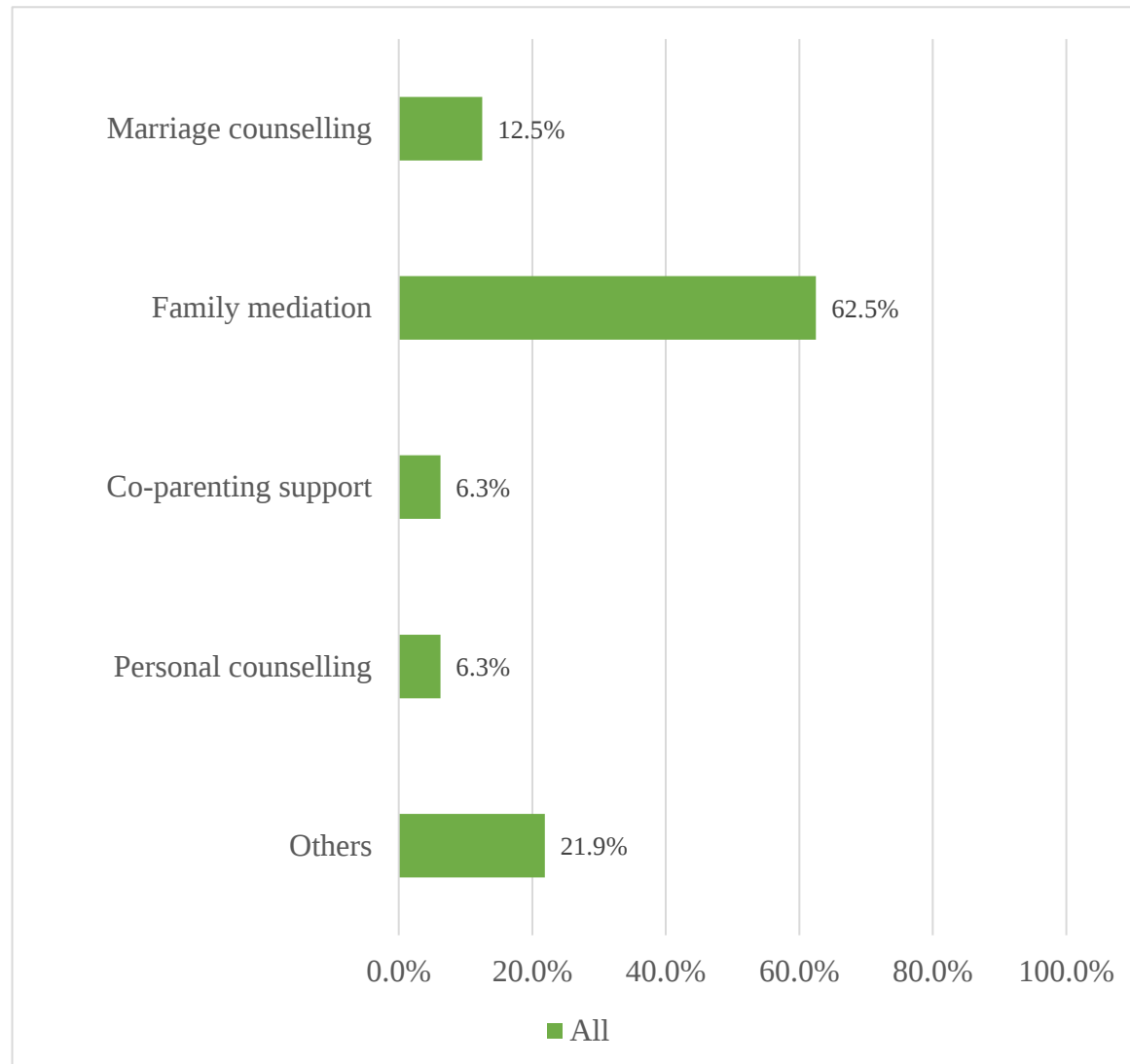
3.4.10 Besides, 26.8% of the service users decided to divorce and 20.9% were referred to other services.

*Diagram 3.4.6: Marital status at the end of the counseling services*



- 3.4.11 Of the service users who were referred to other services, majority (62.5%) of them were referred to family mediation. Other services to which the service users were referred included marriage counselling (12.5%), co-parenting support (6.3%) and personal counselling (6.3%). Besides, 21.9% of the service users were referred to other types of services.

*Diagram 3.4.7: Type of services to which the service users are referred*





# Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation

## Chapter Four

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 Identifying factors leading to divorce ideation is important as it can help social service organisations formulate targeted measure or programmes to provide assistance to couples who think about divorce.
- 4.1.2 The comprehensive study conducted by the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong (2014) collected qualitative data from 41 married individuals by case interviews to explain factors that might affect marital stability. Afterwards, the themes and findings of factors were organised and categorised by adapting the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1997), into four levels, namely:
- Individual level: (1) expectations on partners cannot be met; and (2) certain reasons behind getting married.
  - Couple level: (1) age gap; (2) weak relationship before marriage; (3) birth of first child; (4) retirement; (5) lack of communication; (6) extra-marital affairs; (7) financial stress; and (8) unreasonable behaviours including controlling behaviours, verbal attacks and threats, domestic violence and gambling.
  - Family and friends level: (1) extended family including conflicts with extended family members and extended family members' involvement in marriage and divorce.
  - Societal level: (1) media's portrayal of divorce; (2) working system and culture; and (3) society perception of gender roles; and (4) cross-border marriages.
- 4.1.3 The Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention of the University of Hong Kong conducted a further study on the phenomenon of divorce in Hong Kong in 2022 and pointed out that there are other factors associated with divorce, including spousal backgrounds (couple with different sociocultural backgrounds, long-distant relationship), the length of marriage (2 to 10 years of marriage in Hong Kong), and the age of marriage (young ages).
- 4.1.4 In this Study, both qualitative method (in-depth interview) and quantitative method (analysis of Case Information Form) were used to investigate the factors leading to divorce ideation of the service users.

- 4.1.5 The findings regarding the factors leading to divorce ideation are organised by adopting the Ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1997), into four levels, namely individual level, couple level, family level and societal level.
- 4.1.6 In order to better illustrate the findings from qualitative data, excerpts from the interview files are quoted and translated into both English and Chinese in the following section.

## 4.2 Qualitative Findings

### *Demographics of Participants*

- 4.2.1 In order to collect qualitative data, the service users and caseworkers of the services of the Project were recruited to participate in in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion respectively. Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, and all in-depth interviews and focus group discussion were audiotaped with participants' permission.
- 4.2.2 In total, 21 service users participated in in-depth interviews between the period of 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The demographics of the participating service users are as follows:

*Table 4.2.1: Demographics of the service users participating in in-depth interviews*

| Parental role            | N         | %             |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Mother                   | 13        | 61.9%         |
| Father                   | 8         | 38.1%         |
| Age                      | N         | %             |
| 25-34                    | 4         | 19.0%         |
| 35-44                    | 11        | 52.4%         |
| 45-54                    | 6         | 28.6%         |
| Status of the case       | N         | %             |
| Reconcile                | 10        | 47.6%         |
| Do not have decision yet | 4         | 19.0%         |
| Decide to separate       | 7         | 33.3%         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>21</b> | <b>100.0%</b> |

- 4.2.3 Besides, a focus group discussion was conducted on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 with 7 caseworkers providing services in the Project.

## *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Individual Level*

- 4.2.4 Individual level refers to an individual's actions, beliefs and feelings. At the individual level, it is found that unreasonable behaviours, pre-marital affairs, extramarital affairs, emotional problem, unmet spousal expectation, gender and family values from family of origin, differences in values and sexual orientation were the factors leading to divorce ideation.

### **Unreasonable Behaviours**

- 4.2.5 Unreasonable behaviours not only hamper marital intimacy but also adversely affect family dynamics and children's well-being. The unreasonable behaviours identified in the in-depth interviews include controlling behaviours, verbal attacks, domestic violence, and gambling. Unreasonable behaviours weaken emotional bonds and fuel conflicts, easily leading to relationship breakdowns and divorce ideation.

#### *Controlling Behaviours*

- 4.2.6 Some female service users pointed out that their spouses exerted control over their behaviours. Influenced by traditional values about the division of domestic labours, some male spouses expected their partners to achieve high standards in managing household chores and childcare. As a result, female spouses felt restricted and constrained.

*"In our past marital relationship, I felt that you were always controlling me. I used to stay silent because I was unable to leave this home... Why did you scold me for eating out with friends and going out for work?" (以往嘅婚姻關係我覺得你都係控制緊我，以前我係會不出聲，因為我根本無能力去離開呢個家……點解我出去同朋友食飯你都要鬧，我返工又俾你鬧?) (Service user 13, female)*

*"He really acts like a prince; you must ask his permission before giving any orders... His expectations are extremely high; if you fail even once out of ten times, he will severely scold you." (佢就真係一個王子，你落order(命令)之前要問過佢……期望超高，十次裡面如果你有一次做唔到就鬧爆你。)(Service user 18, female)*

## Verbal Attacks

- 4.2.7 Verbal attacks, including shouting with disrespectful languages and threatening to divorce, occurred in daily life of the couples involved in the Project. Verbal attacks often caused relationship damage and communication breakdown.

*“Our arguments are very intense. He has a very aggressive way of speaking, hurling insults and personal attacks. He often threatens to divorce as a way to try to control me, uses the threat of divorce to try to control me and force me to obey him.” (我哋兩個吵到係好犀利嘅，佢把嘴攻擊性好強嘅，會講一啲侮辱性說話同人身攻擊。佢經常拎離婚嚟威脅我，佢要我服從佢。)* (Service user 4, female)

*“My wife feels that our values are different and that she is being demeaned because my verbal abuse is so severe that it seems like oral violence. I would tell her to leave and ask if she was dating another man. At that time, my wife asked me not to tell her to leave again because she might actually go.” (太太覺得我哋價值觀唔同，同埋佢係下把位，因為我講嘢口臭到好似口頭暴力級別，我會叫佢走，問佢係咪溝仔。太太當時有話唔好再叫佢走，因為佢真係會走。)* (Service user 6, male)

## Aggressive Behaviours

- 4.2.8 A number of female service users reported that their spouses were unable to control their anger and they had aggressive behaviours towards the service users, such as throwing objects or even physically assaulting those service users and their children. Aggressive behaviours of the spouses created an unbearable living situation, compelling the service users to consider separation in order to ensure their safety and well-being.

*“He once tried to hit me, so I went to a shelter and stayed there for three months due to the severity of his aggression... I wanted to leave on my own, but in the end, the children didn't want to be left behind as he threatened to hit us. I took all three of them and left together. The son is still angry with his father because his father hit him quite badly, even grabbing him by the neck and doing other very violent acts.” (佢曾經試過打我，我過咗去庇護中心，住咗三個月，因為佢嘅衝突好大……我想自己離開，最後小朋友話唔好留低我，佢話佢（配偶）會打我哋，我帶住佢哋三個人一齊離開。個仔仍然嚟爸爸，因為爸爸曾經郁手打過佢，都幾嚴重，捏住佢條頸，做一啲好暴力嘅事。)* (Service user 13, female)

*“We’ve had numerous disputes, and some were so severe that I’ve thought about calling the police because of physical altercations. He might douse me with a cup of water or throw food around the house. His mental state hinders his ability to address issues with calmness or reason.”* (我哋好多爭拗，之前其實嚴重到我試過想打電話報警，都已經出現一啲肢體衝突嘅。可能會搵杯水淋我或者喺屋企掙嘢。佢嘅精神狀態令佢唔可以好冷靜或者理性咁處理問題。) (Service user 18, female)

## Gambling

- 4.2.9 It was indicated by caseworkers that spouses’ gambling behaviours could force some of the female service users into debt. Financial strain and fear of debt collection forced those service users to choose divorce as a means to avoid being trapped into debts.

*“In some cases, one party goes gambling and the other one is terrified and afraid that some people would come and collect the debts. As they were facing enormous financial strains and did not know how to return the money, they would choose to draw a line between them and their spouses due to financial considerations.”* (有啲個案嘅其中一方去咗賭博，另一方就覺得好恐怖，又會好驚有人嚟追債或者面對好大嘅經濟壓力，唔知道點樣還錢，都會令到佢哋從經濟方面考慮要先跟你(伴侶)劃清界線。) (Caseworker 1)

## **Extramarital Affairs and Pre-marital Affairs**

- 4.2.10 Extramarital affairs are another significant factor leading to divorce ideation. Around half of the service users reported having experienced extramarital affairs involving either their spouse or themselves. It is revealed that habitual infidelity and unmet emotional needs in the marital relationship were two major causes of extramarital affairs.
- 4.2.11 A few service users stated that they or their spouses had habitually engaged in affairs with others during their relationships with the current partners, even prior to marriage. For these cases, it was difficult to achieve marital reconciliation between the couples. One service user expressed that she had been betrayed even before marriage:

*“The foundation of the marriage was actually not very stable. Even before getting married, there were many arguments about his indiscretions. Even my mother could notice that he wasn't very proper and wasn't fully faithful to her daughter.” (婚姻基礎其實唔係咁穩，喺結婚之前都為咗佢唔檢點嘅行為有好多爭執，甚至乎我媽咪都見到佢唔係咁檢點，並唔係百分百忠於佢個女。)* (Service user 1, female)

- 4.2.12 Besides, some service users explained that their or their spouses' extramarital affairs stemmed from unsatisfactory marital relationships. As their emotional needs were consistently unmet, they stepped out on their spouses to find emotional fulfillment from other romantic relationships. Compared to habitual infidelity, this kind of extramarital affairs was usually occasional and less long-lasting. Therefore, it was easier to reconcile the marital relationships involving this kind of extramarital affairs. One service user said that her spouse cheated on her because he felt being neglected regarding domestic duties, such as child-rearing:

*“I neglected his needs, and he felt he wasn't involved enough (in taking care of children) because we didn't include him. So, in the later stages, he said, “Why did I find someone else? Because you made me unhappy.” (我忽略咗佢嘅需要，佢覺得自己（對於照顧孩子）參與不足，我哋（家人）又無邀請佢。所以到後期，佢會話：「點解我搵其他人呢？因為你令我唔開心。」)* (Service user 8, female)

- 4.2.13 Another service user expressed that he was unfaithful to his spouse due to hatred against his wife:

*“I feel very unhappy, and I harbour resentment towards her (his wife), and deliberately pick fights with her... I talked to my ex-girlfriend about her (his wife). My ex-girlfriend and I are both people dissatisfied with our marital lives, and gradually, I developed feelings for my ex-girlfriend because I wanted someone to listen to me. In reality, both of us just wanted someone to talk to and listen to us.” (我覺得好唔開心，我會對佢（太太）有憎恨，特登同佢鬧交。……我同我以前女朋友都係婚姻生活唔如意，慢慢我同之前女朋友就有感情，因為我想有人聽我講嘢。其實我同佢都係想搵人傾偈，只係想搵樹窿去傾。)* (Service user 5, male)

- 4.2.14 From the perspectives of caseworkers, extramarital affair was a key factor that pull the trigger for the breakdown of relationships rather than being as one of its underlying reasons. Observations drawn from the caseworks show that most of the couple relationships had already been compromised before extramarital affairs. The unfaithful behaviours of one spouse against another one, however, act as critical events which adversely impact a relationship and may lead to irreversible consequences for the future of the couples.

*“The critical moment that when one spouse propose divorce to another is mostly because of the occurrence of some significant events, such as extramarital affairs, which lead to the suffering of the betrayed ones, who feel that their bottom line is crossed.” (最 critical (關鍵) 個下要提出離婚，通常是因為一啲 Significant (重大) 事件，譬如係婚外情，會令被背叛的一方好痛苦同埋過咗底線。)* (Caseworker 4)

- 4.2.15 In general, extramarital affairs can greatly endangers marriage and exert severe consequences on the emotion and self-image of the persons who were betrayed. It was found that when the service users or their spouses discovered their spouses’ affairs, they experienced emotional turmoil and identity crisis, compelling them to take concrete actions, including seeking consultation services, legal advice or deciding to proceed with divorce procedures.

*“He kept finding the other woman intermittently. When I discovered his affair in his IG, it was a complete shock to me. I thought we had reconciled, but then it happened again. That was the first time I had to take a sedative. Later, I met with the social worker and it was around the time I was considering divorce that I spoke with my parents (although she did not end up divorcing). So, my realisation is that if there are problems in a marriage, don't be afraid of seeking help from marital consultation” (佢斷斷續續都有搵 (第三者)，咁有一次我見到佢 IG 就見到 (丈夫的婚外情)。個一刻真係晴天霹靂，以為已經好咗啦，點知又嚟。個一刻係我第一次要食鎮靜劑。之後我就見社工，同埋差唔多離婚嘅時候同咗我父母講 (最後沒有離婚)。所以我有一個領悟就係婚姻有問題嘅話唔好怕麻煩，去見婚姻輔導。)* (Service user 8, female)

*“Service users would be very emotional when it (extramarital affair) is mentioned, just like their pet peeve.” (相處個時一提起 (婚外情) 就會好大情緒，好似中咗地雷或者死穴咁。)* (Caseworker 4)

## **Emotional Problems**

- 4.2.16 Emotional and psychological issues emerged as a major factor straining marital relationships and leading to divorce ideation. Some service users reported experiencing severe emotional turmoil and distress within their marriages. Emotional health issues, such as depression and bipolar disorder, severely affected their marital relationships if they were not understood from their spouses or did not receive timely treatment. The lack of understanding and support from spouse may easily lead to arguments and emotional detachments.

*“Because after I gave birth to my second daughter, my mental state was chaotic, and I had to take medication for a few years. These were the emotional issues I experienced after giving birth. I suffered from depression and bipolar disorder, but my husband did not believe that I had recovered. During subsequent arguments, my husband thought I had a mental illness but refused to take medication, and even planned not to give me custody rights. My husband also reported to the police that I had committed violence and had a mental illness.”* (因為我生完第二個女之後呢，我精神上係好混亂嘅。我都食咗幾年藥嘅。係我產後嘅情緒引致有情緒問題，我患有抑鬱症同躁鬱症，但係之後我嘅丈夫唔相信我已經好返。之後嗌交個陣時，覺得我有精神病但唔食藥，連監護權都打算唔俾我嘅。先生亦有報警話我打人同有精神病。)  
(Service user 8, female)

- 4.2.17 Some service users expressed the conflictual incidents in marriage had triggered intense emotional breakdowns. They reported the profound inner struggle and emotional suffering caused by their troubled marriages. They felt conflicted and helpless about their situations, perceived themselves as useless, and suffered from low self-esteem. The struggle between wanting divorce but feeling unable to leave, caused great internal turmoil and despair. This feeling of despair left service users trapped inside their marital problem. Consequently, divorce emerged as a last resort for service users to consider as a means to escape from their distressing marital circumstances.

*“The first year after the in-law conflicts happened, if it involved issues with my mother-in-law, saying things about her, I would recall conflicts with her and have experienced emotional breakdowns, bursting into tears, and screaming.”* (發生婆媳衝突後頭一年，一提起同奶奶有關嘅事，我就會憶起同佢嗰陣時嘅衝突，自己都試過情緒崩潰、爆喊同爆叫。)  
(Service user 10, female)

*“The marriage relationship caused a great inner struggle within me. On one hand, I did not want this kind of life, but on the other hand, I could not leave. I felt conflicted and helpless about my situation, perceiving myself as utterly useless and suffering from low self-esteem.”* (婚姻關係真係令我內心好掙扎，一方面我唔想繼續過呢種生活，但另一方面又離唔開。我覺得呢個狀況好矛盾同無助，覺得自己真係一無係處，好自卑。)(Service user 13, female)

### **Unmet Spousal Expectations**

4.2.18 Unmet expectations regarding spousal roles and responsibilities emerged as one of the factors contributing to marital conflicts and divorce ideation among the service users. Both husbands and wives expressed disappointment when their partners failed to fulfill the anticipated duties within the relationship.

4.2.19 Women often felt burdened by the disproportionate share of domestic labor and childcare responsibilities, while their husbands were perceived as neglecting these duties. Also, women tended to be expected to meet higher standards for domestic duties and childcare than their male partners could meet. These mismatch in standards further exacerbated feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction within the marital relationships, straining the marital bonds and potentially contributing to divorce ideation among the female service users.

*“The first year, if it involved issues with my mother-in-law, saying things about her, I would recall conflicts with her and have experienced emotional breakdowns, bursting into tears, and screaming. I am always complaining, ‘You don't take care of the child’, ‘You ignore the household chores’, ‘your mother is annoying, and you don't stand by me’. In this situation, he said that he felt no one cared about him at home and he was always asked to this and do that.”* (我成日埋怨：「你唔照顧個仔」、「屋企嘅事情你又唔理」、「你啊媽又煩，你又不幫我」，喺呢個情況之下，佢當時講話覺得返到屋企無關心佢，只會要求佢做呢樣做嗰樣。)(Service user 10, female)

4.2.20 Unmet spousal expectations served as an explanatory lens through which some service users made sense of their marital conflicts and dissatisfaction. They cited everyday examples where their expectations clashed with their partner's behaviours or contributions as clear illustrations of the disconnection underpinning their marital woes.

4.2.21 It should be noticed that the everyday clashes between their expectations and partner's behaviours would accumulate and escalate to more serious problem. The accumulation of various unmet expectations would ultimately contribute to divorce ideation, as they may consider the marriage as a wrong decision.

*“Sometimes when talking to my children, I would say, ‘My biggest mistake was choosing the wrong mother for you.’ I knew I had shortcomings, and initially I thought finding your mom could make up for my deficiencies, but I realised she couldn't do that, and I couldn't return her. My biggest mistake was choosing the wrong mother for you, and this problem is so serious.”*  
 (有時候同仔女傾偈嘅時候，我會話：「我最大嘅錯就係同你哋搵錯咗啊媽。」我知道自己有唔好嘅地方，當初我以為搵咗你哋啊媽，佢可以補足到我嘅缺點，但我發現佢做唔到，而我又無得退貨。我最大嘅錯就係同你哋搵錯咗啊媽，呢個問題係幾咁嚴重。) (Service user 9, male)

### **Gender and Family Values from Family of Origin**

- 4.2.22 It is observed that the families of origin of some service users deeply affected their gender and family values and thus their methods of getting along with spouses. The words and deeds of parents could have profound impacts on service users' behaviours and thoughts. For instance, service users from broken families might not know how to fulfill their roles as parents properly. This could lead to dysfunctional behaviours.

*“I recall my past life experience and find that our current situation is actually closely related to our families of origin, as both my husband and I were raised in foster homes without our parents. We don't know how to jointly take care of a family or maintain family bonds... My husband influences our child by adopting the misconduct of adults, telling our child not to listen to mommy. He said this in front of me. Consequently, my son has started to ignore me.”* (我再諗返，去到呢個狀態其實都好關我哋嘅原生家庭事，因為我同先生嘅父母都唔喺到，係寄宿家庭長大。我哋唔識得點樣一齊照顧家庭，維繫家庭……先生用大人嘅模式影響小朋友，同佢講唔洗理媽咪，係我面前都咁樣講，咁我個仔咪開始唔理我囉。) (Service user 3, female)

- 4.2.23 Also, caseworkers argued that men nowadays tended to be weak in expressing their emotions due to lack of role models in family during their childhood. Traditionally, men were expected only to be contribute economically to a family or relationship, so it was deemed acceptable for them not to form emotional connections with their spouses. As such, men nowadays could not learn from their families of origin about expression of emotions, leading them to tend to be numb in a relationship.

*“Many men did not have education of expressing emotions so that they could not deal with and confront their emotions properly. Men is experiencing a ‘vacuum period’ over their changes in characters and roles, and they could not learn about how to express their emotions from the past generations.” (好多男人無經歷過情感教育，對於自己嘅情感唔識處理同面對，所以男人喺身份同角色嘅轉換上經歷緊一個「真空期」，無辦法從上一代身上學識表達情感。)* (Caseworker 3)

### **Differences in Values**

- 4.2.24 A number of service users indicated differences in values between couples, such as discrepancies in cultural and political stances, parenting, and personal belief. Such discrepancies or clashes in values would lead to conflicts, and even divorce ideation when compromise or consensus could not be reached.

*“During the pandemic, our relationship worsened, to an extent that we dislike each other. We found many things about each other bothersome. No matter in respect of parenting, politics, or pandemic measures, it's very easy to inadvertently hit the sore point of each other, which could easily trigger negative emotions.” (疫情個陣會壞啲，可能都壞到唔係好鍾意對方，會變咗有好多野睇唔順眼。無論係管教、政治、防疫上都好容易踩到對方唔鍾意嘅 pain point (痛點)，就容易觸發到負面嘅情緒。)* (Service user 9, male)

*“I don't like it when things are taken too lightly or when there's a lack of responsibility. His personality is more carefree, and he's easily influenced by others, having rather lax standards for himself. It's difficult for me to make demands of him, just as it's hard for him to ask for anything from me. I feel that this is a primary reason for the problems in our marriage, and it's leading me to consider divorce.” (我唔鍾意一啲嘢好求其或者責任感比較弱，佢嘅性格 Carefree (不受拘束) 一啲，又容易受人影響，對自己的要求比較隨便。我好難要求佢，佢又好難要求我。我覺得呢個係婚姻問題嘅主因，令我有離婚嘅念頭。)* (Service user 21, female)

- 4.2.25 In addition, some caseworkers pointed out that it was easier for young couples to get divorce due to differences in values. They tended to pursue a relationship going beyond financial and practical support, with an attempt to find someone who holds similar values.

*“They would expect each other as soulmates, hoping they could not only provide financial or practical supports to each other as a husband/wife or father/mother, but also share a direction spiritually or with similar values. If they discover they have different values with their spouses, such as the attitudes for parents, the perspectives for money or investment, they would feel that they could not develop their relationships with each other in long term and choose divorce” (佢哋期望對方係一個 Soulmate (靈魂伴侶), 希望對方唔純粹係丈夫同妻子嘅角色或者係爸爸同媽媽的角色, 只係提供一啲經濟支援或者係實務上嘅幫助, 而希望喺心靈上或者價值觀上都有一個一致嘅方向, 如果發現對方同自己嘅價值觀好唔同, 例如對父母嘅睇法唔同, 對金錢嘅睇法唔同, 對投資嘅睇法不同, 都會令到佢哋覺得同呢個人可能唔能夠長遠發展, 佢哋就會喺呢個位置考慮離婚。)* (Caseworker 3)

### **Difference in Sexual Orientation**

- 4.2.26 As indicated by a caseworker, some of the couples would proceed to divorce after one party discovered another one's homosexuality. It is also observed that the reaction to spouse' homosexuality is different for different genders. Men might have less hatred towards his spouse when finding out she was homosexual.

*“There is a case that a mother frequently met her partner with her daughter, makes her wonder why she need to visit an aunt on every weekend.” (有 case (個案) 係太太成日帶個女一齊見個姨姨 (同性伴侶), 令個女會好好奇點解每個 weekend (週末) 都會去見一個姨姨嘅呢。)* (Caseworker 5)

## *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Couple Level*

- 4.2.27 Couple level refers to the interactions between two parties of a couple. At the couple level, various factors could lead to divorce ideation of the service users, including communication problems, weak pre-marriage relationship, inability to resolve conflicts, weak intimacy and sexual dissatisfaction.

### **Communication Problems**

- 4.2.28 Communication problems are the most common factors leading to service users' divorce ideation. Around half of the service users informed that they experienced different kinds of communication problems with their spouses. Firstly, a number of them reported that there was a lack of intimate interactions between couples. They usually talked about routine issues or domestic tasks, but seldom articulated their personal feelings and emotions to each other. A couple's inability to maintain close communications could diminish marital satisfaction. For example, one service user pointed out his dissatisfaction towards marriage due to a dearth of in-depth communications with his wife:

*"I don't even know how long it has been since he hugged me sincerely last time, or since we had a sweet and intimate conversation... We do talk, but it's just trivial stuff, like what I have done today, how the kids are going. Rarely do we delve into matters concerning just the two of us, or discuss topics that both of us are interested in."* (我都唔知有幾耐佢無好認真咁去擁抱我，或者係大家好甜言蜜語咁傾偈……有偈傾呀，無聊野囉，即係講我今日做咗乜野呀，子女今日點樣呀，好少涉及兩個人，或者去傾兩個人共同有興趣嘅話題。) (Service user 6, male)

- 4.2.29 Similarly, another service user reported that she and her spouse seldom chatted face-to-face since getting married:

*"Since we got married, we have not chatted face-to-face. We don't talk to communicate. All our communications are through email and WhatsApp. I think we have not talked to each other verbally for 20 sentences a year, with questions like 'Can you look after our daughter today?' This leaves me feel emotionally dissatisfied because I have emotional needs desperately."* (結婚開始我哋唔會講嘢去溝通，所有溝通就係用電郵和 WhatsApp。真正用口講野我諗一年都唔知道有無二十句，例如問「個女今日你湊得唔得呀？」咁我心靈上面滿足唔到，因為我有好多情感上嘅需要。) (Service user 13, female)

- 4.2.30 Secondly, a few service users exhibited a “demand-withdraw” communication pattern, in which one spouse pressures the other with demands, complaints and criticisms, while the partner withdraws with defensiveness and passive inaction. (Fincham, 2003). For example, a respondent noticed that her complaints and demands led her husband to withdraw from engaging with her:

*“I am always complaining, ‘You don't take care of the child’, ‘You ignore the household chores’, ‘your mother is annoying, and you don't stand by me’. In this situation, he said that he felt no one cared about him at home and he was always asked to this and do that.”* (我成日埋怨：「你唔照顧個仔」、「屋企嘅事你又唔理」、「你啊媽又煩，你又不幫我」，喺呢個情況下，佢當時就話覺得返到屋企無人關心佢，要求佢做呢樣做個樣。） (Service user 7, female)

- 4.2.31 Thirdly, some service users managed conflicts with direct and competitive fighting. They would usually attribute the responsibility to partners or criticise partners’ personal characteristics or behaviours directly. Direct fighting between couples could cause irreconcilable consequences, such as direct confrontations or relationship ruptures. For example, a service user expressed that continuous criticism from her partner made her feel being disrespected and even abandoned:

*“Whenever he (husband) talks, he criticises me, by saying, ‘You are useless. You don't go out to learn anything. It seems that your life is only relying on others.’ ... I've lost the feeling of being respected and loved... This makes me feel like I am abandoned, and I just want to leave deep inside my heart.”* ((丈夫)講嘢其實係一開口佢都係批評我，話：「你無用，又唔出去搵嘢學，人生好似淨係識依賴別人。」……我無咗嗰種被尊重同被愛嘅感覺。……令我感覺被遺棄，喺我心入面我就想走。) (Service user 13, female)

### **Weak Pre-marriage Bonding**

- 4.2.32 A few service users recalled that they did not have a strong bonding with their spouses before getting married. For example, a couple expressed that they had only dated with each other for several months but made a quick decision to get married due to pregnancy. They still did not have sufficient understanding of each other before marriage. After getting married, the hidden discrepancies in values and everyday practices would be exposed when the service users and spouses lived together for a period of time. Those discrepancies might strike the roots of their marriage.

*“I and my wife married due to pregnancy, so was the foundation in relationship strong? It was absolutely not. It is because we discovered she was pregnant after having dated for seven months, and then we married... Later when we moved out and lived with each other (due to in-law conflicts), the discrepancies in family values and ways of handling daily matters between us were exposed.”* (因為我同老婆都係奉子成婚，所以當時嘅基礎係咪好深厚呢？絕對唔係。因為當時我哋一齊七個月就發現有咗（伴侶懷孕），然後就結婚。……後來（因為婆媳糾紛）搬咗出去住，兩個人嘅家庭觀同處事方法嘅唔同就暴露咗出嚟。)(Service user 15, male)

- 4.2.33 A caseworker stated that some service users who married due to pregnancy might still believe that they deserved a better person for marriage.

*“He/ she may have a belief that he/ she deserves better and just has no choice but to enter the marriage because of this (unplanned pregnancy)”* (佢哋心入面有個 belief，覺得其實我 deserve better（找到一個更好的伴侶），但只不過係因為呢件事（未婚生子），所以我無得選擇。)(Caseworker 3)

### **Inability to Resolve Conflicts**

- 4.2.34 Poor communication patterns and inability to resolve conflicts effectively emerged as significant factors straining marital relationships among the service users. Service users often lacked the skills to understand each other's perspectives and reach compromises during disagreements.

*“The biggest problem between us was that I'm a lawyer, so I value principles more, or maybe I'm more rigid, I feel that my reasoning is right. It's also possible that I want others to listen to me more, and I tend to be more dominant. But on the other hand, he is a grown man who wants freedom and dislikes being restrained. I would get the message that, if that's the case for me, then that's how he is too. Either accept it or leave him, don't stay in this vicious cycle that tortures both your physical and mental health, and tortures your own children.”* (其實我同佢之間最大嘅問題，就係因為我係律師，我比較重視原則，又或者可能我比較硬嘅，我覺得我自己嘅道理係啱的。仲有可能我會比較想人哋聽我講野，仲會比較有主導權。但相對嚟講，佢都係大男人嘅，要自由，唔鍾意俾人約束。我會得出一個訊息，其實我本人都覺得，若果係咁樣嘅話，其實佢一路只會係咁樣，一係就接受，一係就離開佢，唔好係呢個惡性循環入面，對自己嘅身心好折磨，對自己嘅小朋友都好折磨。)(Service user 1, female)

- 4.2.35 A lack of good communication patterns was another major obstacle to resolving marital conflicts. The couples failed to establish effective channels to express feelings and thoughts to each other.

*“In any case, there were differences between us. When I look back, we actually did not have a good communication pattern. We did not really communicate... My husband loves home and loves me, but he endures or suppresses himself unilaterally. Nowadays living together, even minor things would trigger arguments. My husband even videotaped me with the lights on. The saddest part was the children witnessed all this, and my daughter hid in the closet out of fright, so this really needs to be addressed.”* (總之係有分歧嘅，而我再回想，其實我哋無一個好好嘅溝通模式。其實我哋冇溝通過……我先生好愛屋企，好愛我，但係佢單方面忍耐或者抑壓自己。宜家同住嘅情況下，好多小事都會引發爭執，丈夫甚至會錄影我仲打曬燈，最可憐嘅係小朋友見到曬所有嘢，個女嚇到躲入衣櫃，所以呢件事確實需要處理。) (Service user 3, female)

- 4.2.36 In the absence of healthy communication and reconciliation efforts, some couples descended into vicious cycles of verbal hostility. They intentionally provoked arguments, struck back at each other, and allowed conflicts to intensify. One service user admitted intentionally starting arguments as a way to get back at his spouse over perceived offences or disagreements.

*“When the relationship was bad, everything seemed wrong. Was there any other reason? No, it was purely being stubborn for the sake of it. I intentionally picked fights with her. Previously, I counted that the time she didn't allow my mother to stay over was the trigger, so I retaliated. I knew if I retaliated, she would react intensely.”* (其實大家關係唔好嘅時候，你好多事都看不順眼，純粹係為拗而拗。我特登同佢鬧交。以前我就算，嗰次係佢唔俾我阿媽返嚟住，嗰個就係契機，我就還擊。我知道如果我還擊，佢就會跳擊。) (Service user 5, male)

- 4.2.37 Inevitably, the accumulation of unresolved conflicts took a heavy emotional toll and fostered senses of helplessness. With conflicts routinely escalating, negative energies permeating the home, and children even witnessing heated disputes, the constant turmoil severely jeopardised marital stability. As one service user expressed, there seemed to be “no solution in sight”.

*“Because we all suffer, but it seems there is no solution in sight.”* (因為大家都好難受，但係又好似見唔到有咩解決方法。) (Service user 9, female)

## **Weak Intimacy**

- 4.2.38 A lack of intimacy and emotional connection was a prevalent issue reported by many service users, significantly impacting their marital relationships. The absence of meaningful communication, quality time spent together, and affectionate interactions contributed to feelings of emotional distance and dissatisfaction within the marriage. Several service users expressed that they had infrequent opportunities for substantial communication or face-to-face interactions with their spouses, hindering their ability to establish a deep emotional bond.

*“We seldom communicate with or see each other face-to-face and so I sought help from Give Marriage a Chance” Project.” (其實連溝通嘅機會、見面嘅機會都好少，所以我搵咗呢個「婚姻·再思」計劃。)*  
(Service user 9, female)

- 4.2.39 Some service users described their living situation as merely cohabiting under the same roof, with each person leading separate lives and lacking genuine emotional exchange or connection. They portrayed a scenario where family members coexisted in the same physical space but remained emotionally distant and detached from one another, akin to living with strangers.

*“It is like we live in the same house. I don’t like what She (wife) likes and she doesn’t like what I like. It is like four family members live in the same house without adequate communication.” (我形容就係，好似大家同屋住，佢(妻子)鍾意做嘅事我不唔鍾意做，我鍾意做嘅事佢亦都唔會做。其實四個人，就好似四個人住埋喺同一個空間，但其實大家冇乜交流。)*  
(Service user 5, male)

- 4.2.40 Experiencing a lack of intimacy with spouses, several service users expressed a strong desire for intimacy, affection, and emotional support from their spouses, but felt that their needs were consistently unmet. Despite their efforts to convey their yearning for a closer connection, their spouses remained emotionally unavailable or unresponsive, leaving them with a profound sense of helplessness, dissatisfaction, and unfulfillment within the relationship.

*“I want a husband who loves me, but no matter what I say he cannot sense it. He only tries to compensate with money, so if I continue, I simply don't want this relationship and marriage. If I stay, I won't get what I want, I just want someone's shoulder to lean on during difficult times, someone to support me, but I don't have that. After marriage, we don't even hold hands, there is zero intimacy, I don't feel this is a complete family at all.”* (我想要一個疼愛我嘅老公，但我點樣講佢都感受唔到。佢都只係用錢補償，所以我再落去嘅話，我根本都唔想要呢個關係同婚姻。我繼續留落嚟我都拎唔到我想要嘅嘢，我只想要一個有困難嘅時候可以依靠嘅肩膀，有人支持，但都冇。我結婚後連拖手都冇，完全冇親密關係，我完全唔覺得係一個好完整嘅家庭。) (Service user 9, female)

- 4.2.41 In essence, these examples highlighted how the service users' marriages lacked mutual understanding, emotional intimacy, physical affection - an inability to build a stable intimate connection that impacted marital quality and even cultivated divorce ideation when emotional needs went unfulfilled.

### **Sexual Dissatisfaction**

- 4.2.42 The quality and frequency of sexual behaviours can also be one of the risk factors for marriage. The caseworkers reported some of the complaints from male service users, arguing that their spouses shared their bedroom with their children and made them had no chances of having sexual behaviours. Also, as reflected in some cases, service users might regard poor sexual performances and experiences as a sign of not getting loved by their spouses. These types of impressions could adversely impact their relationship and even lead to divorce.

*“There is a case where the wife chooses to share a room with the children, which results in a lack of sexual activity. He feels that his wife wants to avoid intimate contact.”* (有個 case 係太太會選擇同小朋友同房，所以會無咩性生活。佢會覺得太太係想避免親密接觸。) (Caseworker 2)

*“In fact, some people who come here say that their sexual life is not harmonious, and they tend to feel that their partner does not love them.”* (其實有啲人來到都會話性生活唔協調，佢哋就會覺得表面黎睇對方唔愛自己。) (Caseworker 3)

## *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Family Level*

- 4.2.43 Family level refers to other family member's involvement in a couple's marriage. Children-related issues including the change in family life cycle due to child-rearing, different parenting styles and parent-child triangulation conflicts, and in-law conflicts from the extended families were the factors associated with divorce ideation.

### **Change in Family Life Cycle due to Child-rearing**

- 4.2.44 It was observed in the focus group discussions that having child could cause a change in family life cycle of a couple due to reduced shared time. Firstly, shared time does not only refer to the time for a couple to spend together, but also means the time for the two spouses to share their thoughts and emotions with each other. Two male service users pointed out that since the birth of their children, their shared time with partners had significantly decreased, leading to inadequate communication and mutual understanding.

*“Since the birth of our daughter, we have been living with my wife’s family and this has reduced the time for us two to get along with each other and face problems together... so the conflicts over values between us has not been solved.”* (個女出世之後，同外家一齊住，少咗兩個人相處同一齊面對問題嘅時間，……有時大家喺價值觀上面嘅衝突就無解決到。)  
(Service user 9, male)

*“After the birth of the first child, she (wife) might still have spare capacity to compromise or communicate on some decisions. But since the birth of the second child, our time for communication has greatly decreased.”* (或者生第一個小朋友嘅時候，佢（妻子）可能仲有餘力去遷就或者去溝通一啲決定，但係去到第二個小朋友出世之後，反而溝通嘅空間就少咗好多。)  
(Service user 12, male)

- 4.2.45 On the other hand, a female service user indicated that her husband felt being ignored on child upbringing, but she did not pay attention to his feelings due to intensive child-caretaking.

*“After the birth of our child, my husband felt being ignored as we had not sought his opinions. He thought that my family dominated the duties of child upbringing and therefore our relationship became worse sharply... regarding child rearing, I actually need my husband’s assistance. Raising a child had been exhausting already. But my husband did not understand my needs. He had many complaints, but I had ignored his feelings, making him unhappy.”* (生咗小朋友之後，先生認為自己被忽視，無徵詢佢嘅意見，會覺得我屋企人霸住小朋友嚟湊，所以個關係就急速變差……照顧小朋友方面，我需要先生嘅幫忙，湊小朋友已經好叻，但係先生就唔理解我嘅需要。佢有好多唔同嘅小投訴，但係我忽略咗佢嘅感受，令佢唔開心。) (Service user 8, female)

### **Different Parenting Styles**

- 4.2.46 A few service users stated that they encountered disagreement over child-rearing, including parenting methods and distribution of childcare workload, which had led to communication problems and conflicts.

*“Regarding child rearing, there is serious disagreement between us, leading to frequent quarrels, lack of communication and relationship breakdown... Our children have special education needs. I could train my son to reach a normal level and he did not need to take pills. But after his father looks after him, his situation has become worse and he need to take pills again.”* (喺照顧子女方面，我哋之間嘅分歧好大，曾經因為咁而有好多爭執，令到大家缺乏溝通，關係決裂……子女有SEN（特殊學習需要），我訓練到個仔能夠正常，唔使食藥，但係爸爸照顧佢就令到佢情況變差，要食藥。) (Service user 3, female)

*“My wife expects me to participate more or has more expectation for my efforts on our child’s studies as a father...But I think that the key role of a father is to play with child. The other half is responsible for child’s studies. I think this is more balanced.”* (我老婆期望我再參與多啲，或者對我嘅學業上會有啲期望，期望我作為爸爸會有多啲input (付出)……但係我就覺得主要爸爸嘅角色都係陪佢玩多一啲，咁另一半就負責學業，咁樣好似會比較平均。) (Service user 12, male)

- 4.2.47 A caseworker pointed out these disagreements over parenting would eventually lead to divorce if the couples could not compromise with each other.

*“I think the difference of parenting style matters a lot. If a couple does not have a consensus on what is right and what is wrong and they do not compromise, they would eventually separate on behalf of “saving” their sons or daughters.” (我覺得是 parenting (養育) 嘅唔同 style (風格) 都影響好大，大家都執著，邊個咩邊個唔咩，大家無一個 compromise (妥協)，到最後就會覺得因為大家唔同嘅情況下，要為咗教子女，而令到大家要分開。)* (Caseworker 2)

### **Parent-child Triangulation Conflicts**

- 4.2.48 Triangulation is a process in which a child is drawn into conflicts between two parents. A few female service users perceived that their male spouses intentionally provoked division in the family, particularly in the parent-child relationship. This was detrimental to family life by shattering family unity and trust. As a result, those service users regarded divorce as the only viable solution to restore peace and protect the well-being of individual family members, especially children.

*“He gave the iPad to our daughter to watch, but she was supposed to be studying for a test. So, I told him not to let her watch the iPad. Then he went crazy, picking up the device and starting to film me. He said he was recording me scolding our daughter. I slapped him. He said he would call the police and claim I was mentally ill and assaulted him. I believed he has planned to do so.” (因為佢(丈夫)俾部 iPad 呀女睇，但呀女考緊試，我叫佢你唔好比 iPad 我女睇。跟住佢發咗癲咁樣拎部機影住我，佢話錄你鬧女咁。我就打咗佢一巴，然後佢就報警拉我，話我有精神病，襲擊佢。我覺得佢已經係有啲部署。)* (Service user 3, female)

*“My son showed anger towards me without reasons, seemingly wanting to hit me, but at the same time, he was very clingy, creating a contradictory feeling of both love and hate. Eventually, it was revealed that my husband had been influencing him, sowing discord between us. He would use foul languages in front of the children, teaching them to curse me.” (個仔開始無緣無故經常對我好撈，好想郁手打我，但係同時之間佢又好黏住我，就有嗰種好矛盾又愛又恨嘅感覺。最後發現原來先生咁樣教佢喇，喺中間做離間嘅工作。佢係小朋友面前用粗口，教佢(兒子)用粗口鬧我。)* (Service users 11, female)

## **In-law Conflicts**

- 4.2.49 Conflicts with members of extended family are common in families that cohabit with in-laws, as Chinese society values the hierarchy of seniority and expects juniors to be obedient. In-law conflicts often occur due to differences in habits, rituals, and hygiene standards, etc. Some female service users indicated that the pressure exerted from the expectations of their mothers-in-law created tension in daily life and diminished their marital satisfaction.

*“I feel that the biggest problem is that everyone (her mother-in-law and husband) has incredibly high expectations. My mother-in-law expects me to help manage and oversee her domestic helper, teach her how to cook, and design various soups and meals for different seasons, and so on... I believe there needs to be more equal communications. However, my mother-in-law thinks that elderly people hold a superior status and that you cannot go against their wishes. She would say, ‘Why don’t you listen to the instructions I give you?’ I feel very frustrated.”* (我覺得最大嘅問題就係所有人(奶奶及丈夫)都有超級高嘅要求，奶奶又要你幫佢管理佢嘅工人，管理佢嘅工人嘅訓練，教佢煮餸，又要設計一年四季唔同嘅湯水同嘢食等等……我就覺得要有一個平等啲嘅溝通，但奶奶就覺得老人家有超人嘅地位，你唔可以逆佢意嘅。奶奶會話：「點解我俾你嘅指令，你唔聽啊？」我覺得好frustrated(挫折)。) (Service user 18, female)

- 4.2.50 Also, in-law conflicts strained the marital relationship by imposing painful challenges on male spouses stuck in a narrow margin created between their partners and family members. A few male service users voiced that they found it deeply distressing to balance the relationships with their partners and family members.

*“The fundamental cause of coming to this plan was in-law conflicts. This issue triggered difficulties in our interactions, and many times the relationship took a sudden turn for the worse. My wife and I...I am stuck in the middle. She feels like I am not understanding her, and we both have a lot of grievances. There's a lot of resentment, which makes it difficult for us to see a way forward.”* (當初嚟呢個計劃係因為婆媳糾紛，因為呢件事觸發到大家相處唔到落去，好多時候段關係急轉直下，我同老婆……特別係我夾喺中間做磨心，佢又覺得我好似唔體諒佢，大家都有好多嘅埋怨，當中有好多怨氣，令到大家唔太睇到點樣行落去。) (Service user 15, male)

- 4.2.51 Some caseworkers considered that poor relationships of families of origin of the two spouses were also a risk factor to their marriages. Some of the cases revealed that parents of both sides could not get along with each other because of past events.

*“In some cases, two FOO (families of origin) would have arguments with each other or could not have conversation with each other because of past events.” (有些情況甚至是兩個 family (家庭)、兩個 FOO(原生家庭)互砌，或者因為以往發生嘅一啲事而傾唔到偈。)* (Caseworker 3)

### *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation - Societal level*

- 4.2.52 Societal level refers to the influences of social situations or social values. At the societal level, traditional perception of gender roles and COVID-19 pandemic can adversely affect marital relationships of couples.

#### **Traditional Perception of Gender Roles**

- 4.2.53 Traditional perception of gender roles still posed challenges to the marital relationships of two service users, in terms of division of domestic labour and childbearing. In Chinese tradition, men are generally expected to be the heads of their households by providing financially for the family and making important family decisions and women are generally expected to do housework at home rather than taking employment outside. Besides, some Chinese families wish to have a son to carry on the family name. A female service user expressed that her husband stuck to the tradition and therefore opposed letting her go to work, provoking conflicts between the two parties.

*“He might be a traditional man before. He hoped that his wife took the role of doing housework within home only. Since I went to work, our conflicts had escalated. I feel that he cared a lot about his ‘face’, so he did not want me to go to work outside.” (以往可能佢都係一啲傳統嘅男性，佢都希望妻子喺屋企做一個主內嘅角色。自從我自己出去工作之後，衝突就好大。感覺佢係為咗自己嘅面子，唔想我出去打工。)* (Service user 13, female)

- 4.2.54 Another female service user voiced that the family members of her husband blamed her for bearing a daughter instead of a son and this adversely affected their marital relationship.

*“The family members of my husband also affected our relationship. They blamed me for bearing a daughter...This made me unhappy.” (先生家人都影響到我同佢嘅關係，佢哋怪責我生咗個女……令我不開心)*  
(Service user 8, female)

- 4.2.55 The increasing status of women nowadays is one of factors that challenge and reinforce the traditional perception of gender roles at the same time. It is a fact that working women could have better socioeconomic status and able to strike for power of discourse in family affairs. However, in some cases of the caseworkers, female service users with works tend to demand their husbands to be the same as them and require them to take up the leading role of their family. If the husbands could not fulfil the role, their female spouse would have expectation discrepancy and results in poor relationship.

*“A lot of women have achievements in their works and lead to some expectations of their families, hoping their husbands to be the leading role they aspired and unintentionally increasing their expectations of their husbands. If the men cannot fulfil the leading role they are expected, their wife would have no choice but to take care of them, causing a state which both of the spouses are unsatisfactory” (很多女士喺工作上都得到成就，其實佢哋對家庭嘅關係有啲期望，會好希望男士做到佢心目中嗰個帶領嘅角色，所以佢都唔為意咁將對丈夫嘅期望拉高。如果男士 fulfil (滿足) 唔到帶領的角色，自自然然變成太太拉住先生向前走，變成大家都喺一個不滿嘅狀態。)*  
(Caseworker 3)

### **Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic**

- 4.2.56 The impacts of COVID-19 on couple and family relationships are extensive and lead to a number of uncertainties in a marriage. As consolidated by caseworkers, the economy had been dragged down by the pandemic and led to the high unemployment rate during the time, causing financial strain of many families and a lot of family conflicts. For example, in one case, the female service user, who were a housewife, had arguments with her husband as she was requested to work in order to support the family financially, leading to her divorce ideation.

- 4.2.57 The working patterns and modes along with the pandemic also intensified the conflicts between couples and in families. Because of COVID-19, many of the working spouses, especially, men, needed to work from home and spend time with the stay-home spouses, increasing the chances of conflicts among the spouses and their children.

*“The couple had no problem to get along with each other in the past, but since they both work from home, they will be easily to argue with each other because of trivia, for example whether to switch on air conditioner.”*  
(*夫婦*平時(相處)就無咩所謂,但係因為 Home Office (在家工作)兩個人留喺屋企入邊,就因為生活瑣事,好簡單就係開唔開冷氣,就會嗌交。)(Caseworker 2)

- 4.2.58 More than that, because of the work-from-home patterns, the working spouses would change the family dynamics by involving more in daily housework and parenting, which was mainly responsible by the stay-home spouses. The power struggles with family affairs would further impact adversely relationships of the couples.

*“One of the cases is about a husband originally work in mainland and come back to Hong Kong once a week, and he could not come back to mainland because of COVID-19, so he stayed at home every day and had many comments on childcare, made the wife could not help purposing divorce.”* (其中一個(個案)係喺國內做嘢,一個星期返嚟一次,但係因為 COVID 佢唔能夠返去,每日都喺屋企,見面後就有很多評論,照顧小朋友唔好,令老婆忍唔住想提出離婚。)(Caseworker 3)

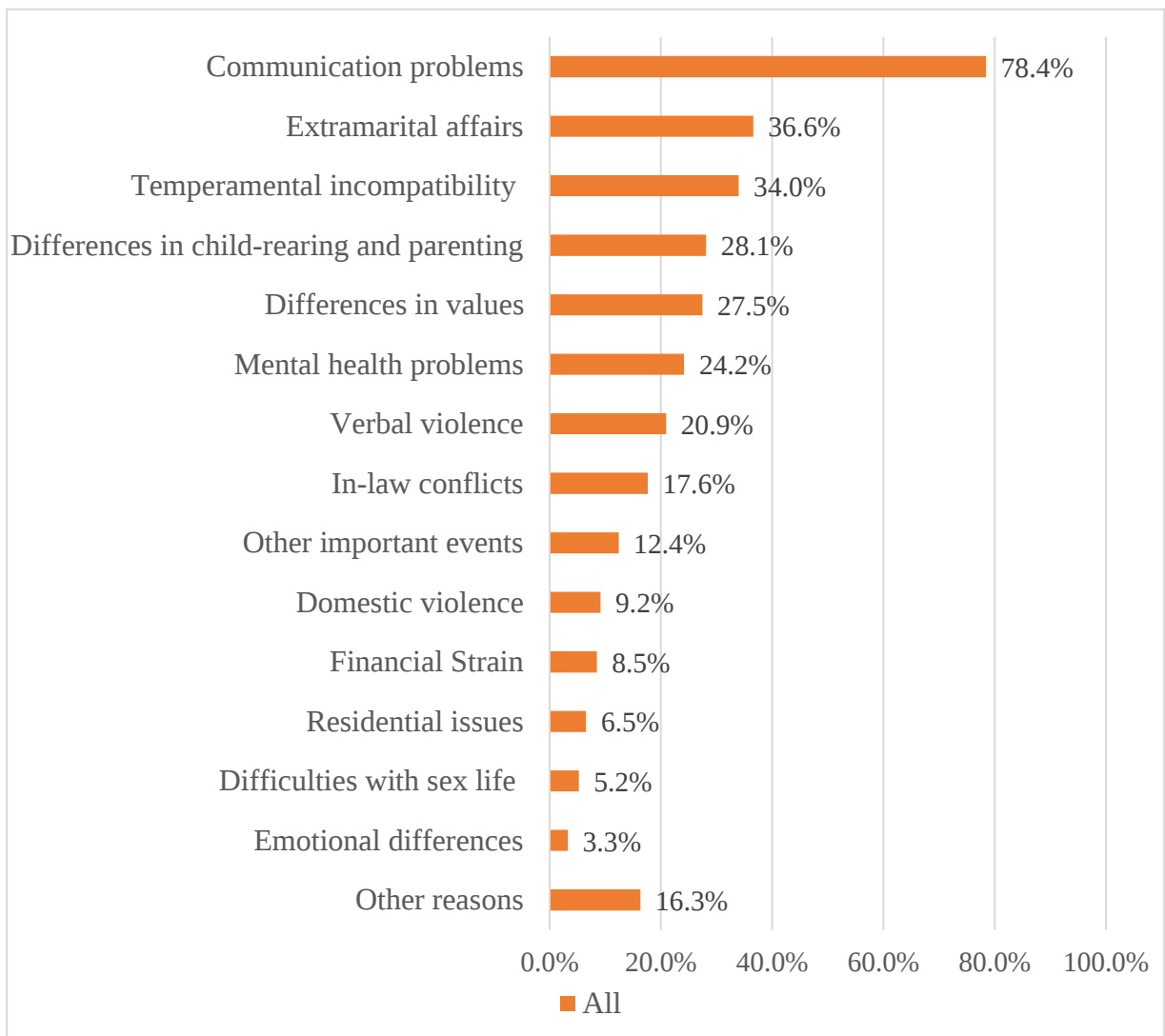
## 4.3 Quantitative Findings

4.3.1 In Case Information Form, questions were designed to ask about the reasons for divorce ideation for the service users and their spouses. The total number of respondents is 153. In this section, the service users' and their spouses' reasons for divorce ideation are presented.

### *Reasons for Divorce Ideation (Service Users)*

4.3.2 The most common reasons for the service users to have divorce ideation was communication problems (78.4%). More than one third of the service users considered divorce due to extramarital affairs (36.6%) or temperamental incompatibility (34.0%). Also, around one quarter of the service users thought of divorce because of differences in child-rearing and parenting (28.1%), differences in values (27.5%), or mental health problems (24.2%).

*Diagram 4.3.1: Reasons for divorce ideation (service users)*



- 4.3.3 Analysed by gender, the proportions of female service users who regarded communication problems (86.0%) or differences in values (34.0%) as the reasons for divorce ideation were significantly higher than those of male service users (communication problems: 64.2%; differences in values: 15.1%).

*Table 4.3.2: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by gender (service users)*

|                        | <b>Male</b> |          | <b>Female</b> |          |
|------------------------|-------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|                        | <b>N</b>    | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b>      | <b>%</b> |
| Communication problems | 34          | 64.2%    | 86            | 86.0%    |
| Differences in values  | 8           | 15.1%    | 34            | 34.0%    |
| <b>Total</b>           | 53          | 100.0%   | 100           | 100.0%   |

- 4.3.4 Analysed by whether the service users had divorced family members, a significantly higher proportion of the service users who had divorced family members regarded differences in child-rearing and parenting (51.6%) as the reason for divorce ideation, when compared to those who did not have divorced family members (22.7%).

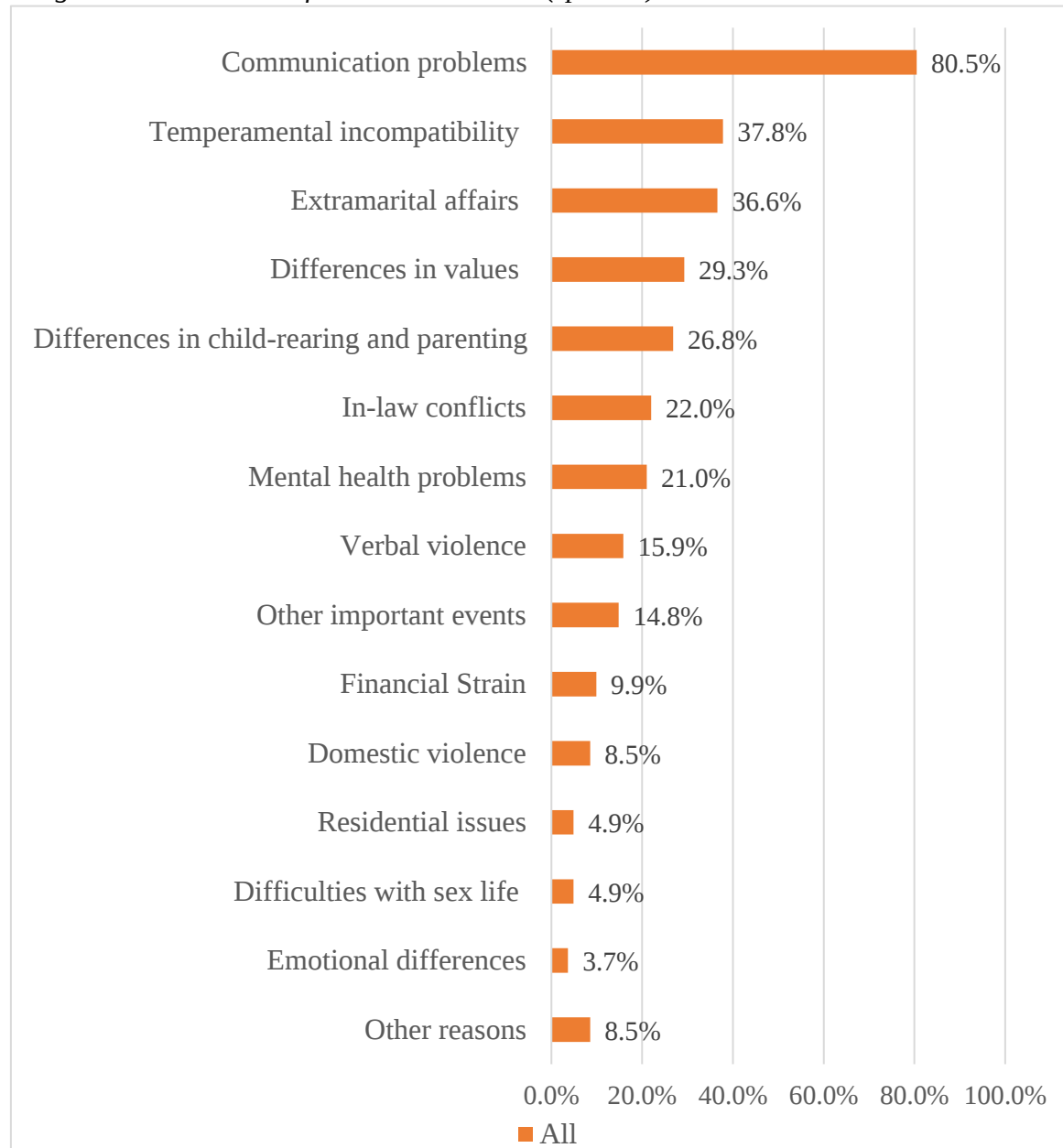
*Table 4.3.3: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by whether the service users had divorced family members (service users)*

|                                            | <b>Have divorced family members</b> |          | <b>Do not have divorced family members/ do not know</b> |          |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|
|                                            | <b>N</b>                            | <b>%</b> | <b>N</b>                                                | <b>%</b> |
| Differences in child-rearing and parenting | 16                                  | 51.6%    | 27                                                      | 22.7%    |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 31                                  | 100.0%   | 119                                                     | 100.0%   |

### *Reasons for Divorce Ideation (Spouses)*

4.3.5 Case Information Form recorded the reasons for divorce ideation of more than half (53.6%) of service users' spouses. The most common reasons for the spouses to have divorce ideation was communication problems (80.5%). More than one-third of them considered divorce due to temperamental incompatibility (37.8%) or extramarital affairs (36.6%). Also, more than one quarter of them thought of divorce because of differences in values (29.3%) or differences in child-rearing and parenting (26.8%).

*Diagram 4.3.4: Reasons for divorce ideation (spouses)*



- 4.3.6 Analysed by gender, the proportions of female spouses who regarded temperamental incompatibility (50.0%) or differences in child-rearing and parenting (37.5%) as the reasons for divorce ideation were significantly higher than those of male spouses (temperamental incompatibility: 26.2%; differences in child-rearing and parenting: 16.7%).

*Table 4.3.5: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by gender (spouses)*

|                                            | Male |        | Female |        |
|--------------------------------------------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                            | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Temperamental incompatibility              | 11   | 26.2%  | 20     | 50.0%  |
| Differences in child-rearing and parenting | 7    | 16.7%  | 15     | 37.5%  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 42   | 100.0% | 40     | 100.0% |

- 4.3.7 Analysed by whether the spouses had divorced family members, a significantly higher proportion of the spouses who had divorced family members regarded differences in child-rearing and parenting (52.6%) as the reason for divorce ideation, when compared to those who did not (19.7%).

*Table 4.3.6: Reasons for divorce ideation, analysed by whether the service users had divorced family members (spouses)*

|                                            | Have divorced family members |        | Do not have divorced family members/ do not know |        |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------|--------|
|                                            | N                            | %      | N                                                | %      |
| Differences in child-rearing and parenting | 10                           | 52.6%  | 12                                               | 19.7%  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 19                           | 100.0% | 61                                               | 100.0% |

## 4.4 Summary

- 4.4.1 The factors leading to divorce ideation are organised and categorised by using the Ecological model. Four levels of factors are identified, namely (a) individual level, (b) couple level, (c) family level and (d) societal level.
- 4.4.2 Individual level refers to an individual's actions, beliefs and feelings. At the individual level, it is found that unreasonable behaviours (i.e. controlling behaviours, aggressive behaviours, gambling), extramarital and pre-marital affairs, emotional problems, unmet spousal expectations, gender and family values from the family of origin, differences in values, and difference in sexual orientation were the factors leading to divorce ideation.
- 4.4.3 Couple level refers to the interactions between two parties of a couple. At the couple level, various factors could lead to divorce ideation of the service users, including communication problems, weak pre-marriage bonding inability to resolve conflicts, weak intimacy and sexual dissatisfaction.
- 4.4.4 Family level refers to other family member's involvement in a couple's marriage. At the family level, the change in family life cycle due to childbearing, different parenting styles and parent-child triangulation conflicts, as well as in-law conflicts from the extended families were the factors associated with divorce ideation.
- 4.4.5 Societal level refers to the influences of social situations or social values. At the societal level, the traditional perception of gender roles and COVID-19 pandemic could adversely affect the marital relationships of couples.
- 4.4.6 Besides, the quantitative findings of the Case Information Form displayed that the most prevalent factors leading to divorce ideation among the service users was communication problems (78.4%), followed by extramarital affairs (36.6%), temperamental incompatibility (34.0%), differences in child-rearing and parenting (28.1%) and differences in values (27.5%). Other factors included mental health problems (24.2%), verbal violence (20.9%), in-law conflicts (17.6%), etc. Analysed by gender, female service users were more likely to consider divorce due to communication problems and differences in values, when compared to male service users. Besides, services users who had divorced family members were more likely to think of divorce because of differences in child-rearing and parenting.
- 4.4.7 Although many of the factors identified in this study align with the results of a previous local study conducted by the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong in 2014, several notable and significant findings were explored further. At the individual level, sexual orientation first appears to be a factor leading to divorce ideation. At the family level, the influences of family of origin are highlighted as it could deeply affect an individual's gender and family values. At the societal level, the impacts of COVID-19 are definitely a new factor in this area of study but its influences were likely limited within a period of time during the pandemic. It caused financial strain of some families and changed the working patterns, which could also lead to the divorce ideation of some couples.



## Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage

### Chapter Five

#### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Around 30 years ago, Stinnet (1983) has asserted the need for strengths-focused family research that complement and supplement the prevailing medical model which is problem and pathology centered. In Hong Kong, studies about the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage which are in crisis are rarely found in local context. Hence, there is a need to investigate this issue in the context of Hong Kong in the hope that such findings can ground intervention and educational efforts.
- 5.1.2 A recent study in 2019 (Karimi, Bakhtiyari, & Masjedi Arani, 2019) has carried out a systematical review on the qualitative studies in Persian and English electronic databases to examine the protective factors associated with marital stability in long-term marriage. Some notable factors were identified and could be further classified as intrapersonal and interpersonal. Prominent intrapersonal factors include spirituality and religion, commitment, personality characteristics, patience, being supportive, forgiveness, etc. and prominent interpersonal factors include constructive engagement, sexual relationship, role division, spending quality time, etc. Some aspects, such as the role of children and couples' financial issues, were beyond the intrapersonal and interpersonal components.
- 5.1.3 The analysis of the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage is also based on the Ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1997) adopted in the previous chapter, that categorised the factors into individual level, couple level, family level and societal level.
- 5.1.4 Both qualitative method (in-depth interview) and quantitative method (analysis of Case Information Form) were used to investigate the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage.

## 5.2 Qualitative Findings

### *Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Individual Level*

- 5.2.1 At the individual level, proactive help-seeking behaviours established a starting point for service users and their spouses to face and deal with difficulties in marriage. Furthermore, the Project provided the service users with new perspectives on managing their marriage, including recognition of the importance of quality time and reflection on marital problems.

#### **Proactive Help-seeking Behaviours**

- 5.2.2 In Chinese traditions, “family disgraces” are not to be exposed or it can be viewed as bringing shame or embarrassment to one’s family. Influenced by Chinese culture, couples in Hong Kong may not be willing to seek help from outside source on marital problems. It is mentioned in a study conducted by the National Divorce Decision-Making Project (2015) that although divorce ideation is common but meanwhile it is dynamic. Many individuals thinking of divorce would still choose to stay in the marriage and enjoy happy marriage life. The critical point is whether there are suitable tools to repair the marriage. Seeking help proactively from external sources may be one of them. Some service users expressed that the services of the Project were beneficial to them regarding marital relationship, and they wished to obtain assistance from professional service, such as marital counseling, earlier. Therefore, awareness of the need to seek help and taking actions to seek help can provide individuals in marital crisis with more opportunities to review and solve the difficulties encountered.

*“This Project can really help those couples or partners who are in conflicts. Actually, it is difficult for Chinese to criticise others or share with others. There is a need to ask someone with skills to reconcile the relationship and give guidance for the future direction.....I think that these services are important.” (呢個計劃真係幫到一啲爭執緊嘅夫妻或者伴侶。其實中國人好難當面去批評人或者同人分享。要有一啲有技巧嘅人去疏導個關係，去指導一啲方向……我覺得呢啲服務係重要嘅。)* (Service user 5, male)

*“So lastly, I comprehend that if there are marital problems, don’t think that it is bothersome to find marital counseling. You will find it very helpful when you have used it one to two times.” (所以我最後有一個領悟，就係婚姻有問題嘅話，唔好怕麻煩，去見婚姻輔導。一次兩次之後你會覺得係好有用。)* (Service user 8, female)

## **Recognition of the Importance of Quality Time**

- 5.2.3 In the in-depth interviews, when the service users were asked what they would like to do in the future to improve marital relationship. Some of them responded that they recognise the importance of quality time and mutual understanding after using the service. Hence, they wished to have more quality time with partners. Other studies also have shown that time together is an indicator of marital satisfaction as it allowed couples to maintain their couple identity (Dew, 2009).

*“We need to spend more time for only two of us to get along with each other and care about each other seriously. Really spend more time wholeheartedly to chat with each other.”* (需要花多啲啲時間，兩個人獨自相處，認真關心對方，真係用心花多啲時間去同對方傾偈。)  
(Service user 6, male)

*“We need to make some quality time. Maybe we choose some dates, such as at Friday night, to eat out and watch movies.”* (我哋需要製造一啲 Quality time，可能大家 set(訂立)一啲日子，可能定咗係星期五晚，出去食飯、睇戲。)  
(Service user 17, female)

## **Reflection on Marital Problems**

- 5.2.4 Reflecting on marital relationships is important, particularly because it helps make sense of the complicated aspects of relationships. The service provided a supportive setting for these reflections, allowing the service users to contemplate their marriage. Through guided reflection, the service users might be able to gain a new perspective with a balanced and thoughtful mindset, enabling them to make considered choices about their responses to marital challenges and the future direction of their marriage.

*“I’ve reflected on when our relationship started to deteriorate, what factors were involved, and then the changes that occurred, and when it would be improved again, as well as how I dealt with the problems every time.”* (我反思由幾時開始關係會變差，有咩因素，其後有轉變，有咩情況下又會好返。每次面對同一個問題，我點樣處理。)  
(Service user 1, female)

- 5.2.5 Some service expressed that they even began to reflect on their own responsibilities for the marital problems and think from spouses' perspective after participating in the activities of the Project, facilitating the recreation of mutual understanding and close communication.

*“Initially, I moved back to my family, he instead wanted me to go back and live with my mother-in-law, which made me extremely angry. I felt that my husband didn't understand or support me, which greatly affected our relationship. After participating in the activity (workshop), I realise that he has also tolerate me a lot. I discover that my poor relationship with his mother has made him depressed, and he may also need help to work through it.”* (我開頭搬返娘家，佢仲要我返去同奶奶住，我當時係極度憤怒。我覺得我老公唔明白，唔支持我，好影響呢段關係。參加活動（工作坊）之後，發現佢都容忍咗我好多，我發現我同佢媽媽嘅關係咁差，其實佢自己都好壓抑，佢都好崩潰，其實係咪都需要幫佢處理下。) (Service user 10, female)

### *Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Couple Level*

- 5.2.6 At the couple level, the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage include love and commitment, communication, constructive engagement, positive communication, and hopefulness about marriage.

#### **Love and Commitment**

- 5.2.7 A high level of commitment between a couple is widely recognised as a significant protective factor for marriage. Commitment fosters greater resilience in the face of marital challenges, as partners are more inclined to engage in positive behaviours that protect and strengthen the marital bond. A few service users expressed affection for their spouses, even when their spouses were unfaithful. Committed spouses were more likely to hold positive attitudes and exhibit active behaviours, including improving themselves, addressing their problems, and stabilising their emotions in order to resolve marital issues.

*“I feel that no matter what, I need to handle this situation well. I don't want a divorce because I feel like I owed my husband from a past life. No matter how poorly he treats me, I am still deeply infatuated with him. I genuinely cherish this feeling.”* (我覺得無論我點都好，我都要搞好呢件事。我唔想離婚，因為我前世欠咗呢位先生。無論佢點樣對我衰，我始終係醉心於佢，即係真係喜歡呢個感覺。) (Service user 1, female)

*“I am a Christian, and I believe that marriage is a commitment that should not be broken lightly. I feel that my wife may have lost her way, but she will come back.”* (我信奉基督教，我覺得婚姻係一個承諾，唔可以隨便去打破。我覺得當時太太可能走錯路，佢會返嚟嘅。)

(Service user 16, male)

### **Constructive Engagement**

- 5.2.8 Constructive engagement is a type of conflict management strategies, which including mutual negotiation and conversation, cooperation with one's partner, and the willing commitment to openness, spousal support, and responsibility (Feeney & Karantzas, 2017). In some cases, both spouses participated in the Project and were willing to have mutual conversation and cooperation with each other. It is observed that these couples were more likely to repair their marriages with greater efforts, such as enhancing communication skills, becoming more empathetic towards partners, etc. For example, a male service users claimed that his wife had invited him to participate in the Project after he expressed dissatisfaction with their marriage. After receiving the services of the Project for a period of time, he then felt a sense of hope for his relationship with spouse as they started trying to disclose feelings and thoughts to each other currently.

*“I felt that there were communication problems between us. I told her. I tried to read books and talk to friends to find the ways out...Afterwards my wife found this service...We talk more now. I have a sense of hope now.”* (我覺得同太太溝通有問題，我講咗俾佢聽，我自己亦有睇書、搵朋友傾，……後尾我太太搵到呢個服務。……我哋宜家多咗嘢講，我覺得有希望嘅。)

(Service user 12, male)

- 5.2.9 Another service user indicated that he had a strong feeling of depression due to divergence in family values with his wife and in-law conflicts. Then, his wife actively sought help from caseworkers. Both of them engaged in the Project and gradually developed mutual understanding of each other.

*“I think my wife has changed a lot. She understands my feelings more...Luckily, my wife seeks changes actively. She went to find social workers actively. This was a blessing to me when I was in a trough.”* (我覺得我老婆轉變咗好多，多咗了解我嘅感受。……我老婆好彩係一個主動去改變嘅人，因為佢主動去搵社工，呢件事亦係我當時低潮底下，其中一件感恩嘅事。)

(Service user 15, male)

## **Positive Communication**

- 5.2.10 After participating in the Project, some service users had learnt how to have positive communication with their spouses, in which they interacted based on positive attitude, aimed at mutual understanding and satisfying for both parties involved.

### *Improvement on Emotion and Conflict Management*

- 5.2.11 The service equipped the service users with skills and techniques to better manage their emotions and resolve conflicts within their marital relationships. By learning effective strategies for emotional regulation and constructive communication, couples experienced significant improvements in their ability to navigate challenging situations and prevent escalations. Developing emotional awareness and control allowed service users to respond more calmly and rationally during disagreements, reducing the likelihood of intense arguments or hurtful outbursts. This newfound capacity for self-regulation fostered a more harmonious and respectful dynamic between partners.

*“The counselors would give some suggestions to see if we could do it as it was easier for us to accept his/her suggestions, such as communication methods, how to control emotions, and how to stop ourselves. After that, the conflicts were reduced a bit and became less intense.”(輔導員會俾一啲意見睇下我哋做唔做到，因為佢講嘅嘢我哋容易接受，例如溝通方法，點樣控制情緒，點樣制止自己。之後衝突係少咗啲，無咁激烈。)* (Service user 4, female)

### *Calm Expression and Non-judgmental Listening*

- 5.2.12 In the previous chapter, communication problems are found to be the most common factors leading to divorce ideation, in various forms, including a lack of intimate interactions, a “demand-withdraw” communication, competitive fighting to combat conflicts. In the in-depth interviews, those service users encountering communication problems opined that open and honest communication and peaceful conversations were something they would need to do in the future to enhance their marital well-being. Some service users mentioned that their marital relationship did improve after changing their communication methods with spouses in a better way, such as expressing feelings and thoughts calmly and frankly, non-judgmental listening, avoiding blaming spouses, etc.

*“I need to talk peacefully. Because I was impatient before and thought everything he (husband) was wrong...Communication is very important. When we talk more and understand more about each other's thoughts, we know how to improve our relationship.”*(真係要心平氣和咁樣傾，因為我之前好躁，真係聽唔入耳，好似佢（丈夫）講咩我都覺得唔啱。……溝通好重要，大家傾多啲，了解多啲大家嘅諗法，就會知道點樣去改善。)(Service user 10, female)

*“Perhaps we should not have too much apprehension. Just speak our thoughts. Don't hide our thoughts.....Because there are many things that we should speak to each other earlier. When we speak our thoughts, we may feel more comfortable. This will be good to us in the long term.”*(或者我哋唔好咁多顧慮，想講就講，唔好喺心入面隱藏咁多嘢，……因為有好多嘢其實都應該早啲講，或者會舒服啲，對大家長遠嚟講會更加好)(Service user 19, female)

### *Mutual Understanding and Affirmation*

- 5.2.13 Several service users shared that the Project had greatly enhance their marital relationship with their spouses. Among them, a number of couples, whose relationship had been broken, could even preserve their marriage. This was result of improved communications, greater mutual understanding and empathic attitudes brought about by the services of the Project.

*“Our relationship had been broken before, but now we can talk, and it's not that difficult anymore. Sometimes when he is on call, I go in to keep him company and cook something for him to eat, like making salad dumplings for him. He is very happy. The relationship is really different now. It would no have been so close like now before.”*(個陣關係其實已經破裂咗，依家就可以有傾有講，唔會咁辛苦。有時佢去 on call（上班）嘅時候，我會入去陪佢，煮點啲野俾佢吃，煮啲沙律餃子俾佢食。佢好開心。關係真係唔同咗，以前就唔會咁密囉。)(Service user 8, female)

*“Our relationship has changed and become way better and positive...Most of the times, when she found something dissatisfying, she would express her discontent and complaint directly. After receiving counseling, she has contemplated what the warmth of a family is. Because she didn’t understand that before and was completely confused. Then, she gradually felt that and understood that. Now, the atmosphere of our family is much better. Our family is happier.”* (成個關係轉變咗，好咗好多，亦都正向咗好多。……好多事佢（妻子）一見唔順眼，就會好直咁表達自己，可能埋怨咁。輔導之後，其實佢有去思考家庭嘅溫度，因為一開始佢唔明白，一頭霧水，之後佢逐步感受到，佢覺得自己明咗。宜家家庭氣氛好咗好多，成個家庭都快樂咗。) (Service user 15, male)

### *Hopefulness about Marriage*

- 5.2.14 Hopefulness served as a powerful motivator, inspiring couples to actively work on improving their relationships and exploring new avenues for understanding and connection. They recognised that while significant progress had been made, further efforts and mutual commitment were still required to strengthen their bond and navigate future challenges together successfully.
- 5.2.15 Before receiving the service, many service users felt trapped in hopelessness, believing that positive change in their marital relationship was impossible. The counseling process facilitated a profound shift in the perspectives and mindsets of some service users. They started to recognise the changes of spouses and affirmed the improvement on each other.

*“I think the biggest change is that I feel a little hopeful, like it can be solved. I originally felt that it was really difficult to change a person. Now I can see my wife's change.”* (我諗最大嘅改變係感覺到有一啲希望，好似問題係可以解決嘅。我原本覺得好似真係好難去改變一個人，宜家睇到太太係有改變嘅。) (Service user 12, male)

*“I hope that he (spouse) is improving and it (the marital relationship) seems to be developing in a good way. I also think that I want to maintain this relationship. We may have to work hard to explore room for improvement in the marriage.”* (我都希望佢(配偶)喺改善緊，宜家(婚姻關係)似乎係向好嘅方面發展。我都想保持呢段關係，喺呢段婚姻入面可能要再好努力咁探索一下有咩空間可以改善。)  
(Service user 18, female)

- 5.2.16 Through the sessions, the service users regained a sense of hope which was a renewed belief that a better marriage was attainable, whether that meant improving their current marriage or starting anew. This rekindled hope empowered them to consider their options and make conscious decisions about the path forward.

*“Because at first I felt deeply hurt in their in-law conflicts, because she would never understand my feelings. Now, She will start to understand my feelings. So, of course, I would hope to resolve it and at least our relationship is developing in a better direction”* (一開始覺得我喺佢哋(妻子和媽媽)嘅婆媳糾紛入面，我係好受傷嘅，因為佢(妻子)根本唔會了解我嘅感受。宜家佢會開始體會我嘅感受。所以，當然我會希望解決到，我哋嘅關係起碼向緊好嘅方向發展。)(Service user 15, male)

### *Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage – Family Level*

- 5.2.17 At the family level, family of origin and children’s well-being were the key factors. Firstly, positive role models within the family of origin have a significant impact on motivating service users to prioritise unity within their marriages and families. Additionally, the presence of children and the responsibility of raising them often act as a protective factor in preserving marriages.

#### **Family of Origin**

- 5.2.18 A family of origin refers to the immediate family in which a person is born and raised. It plays an important role in a person’s upbringing, values, beliefs, an early attachment pattern. Several service users pointed out that their fathers’ teaching about family and dedication to family had served as a model for them, motivating them to maintain unity in marriage and family with efforts and patience.

*“I think my family of origin makes me manage my marriage life with patience. Because my father taught me from my childhood that our four family members are the four legs of a table. The table would fall apart if either one of the legs is broken...I talked to my husband that even we divorce, I don't want you to go to the bad as you are the father of my daughter.”* (我覺得本身家庭嘅緣故都令我有耐性經營婚姻，因為我爸爸從小到大教我哋一家四個人，一張枱四隻腳，無咗邊隻都會散。……我同我老公講，就算我同你離婚，我都唔想你壞，因為你係我個女嘅爸爸。) (Service user 8, female)

*“My father has always dedicated himself to the family unconditionally. This affects me the most. After the occurrence of in-law conflicts, even he thinks that my wife has done something in an unduly and unsophisticated way, he continues to dedicate himself to our family...He comes to take care of our children...Financially, he have tried many times to give money to me and my wife. This makes me experience his unconditional love even more. I think he set a model for me.”* (我爸爸一向對家庭無條件付出，呢件事最影響我，……宜家有婆媳糾紛之後，縱使佢覺得我老婆有啲地方做得好過份好唔成熟，佢都會繼續為我個家庭付出……過嚟幫手照顧小朋友……金錢上更加無數次想塞錢俾我同我老婆，呢件事我更加體驗到嗰種無條件嘅愛，不計恩仇，我諗呢件事正正就係俾我嘅典範。) (Service user 15, male)

### **Children's Well-being**

- 5.2.19 The presence of children and the responsibility of raising children often act as a protective factor of preserving marriage. About half of the service users expressed that child was the major reason for maintaining relationships with spouses. The findings reflected that couples with children often strived to maintain a stable and supportive environment for their offspring, encouraging them to resolve conflicts and uphold the family unit. The shared responsibility and focus on the well-being of children could deter partners from seeking separation and instead motivate them to address marital difficulties.

*“I think it is not that easy to divorce. If I do not have children, divorce would be a piece of cake. But having children can involve a lot of other things that may affect their growth.”* (我會覺得離婚都唔係咁易做嘅。如果我無小朋友，離婚都當食生菜啦。無咩所謂，但有小朋友會牽涉到好多嘢，影響到佢哋成長。) (Service user 10, female)

*“But in the end, one of my major concerns is this: how will my two daughters fare? Can I, on my own, provide a healthy environment for my two daughters to grow up? I’ve also realised throughout this process that my husband has contributed a lot as well.”* (到最後，其中幾個大概諗法就係：咁我兩個女點樣呢？我自己一個人係唔係可以提供一個健康嘅環境俾我兩個女成長呢？我都諗到喺呢個過程入面，我先生都幫咗好多。) (Service user 18, female)

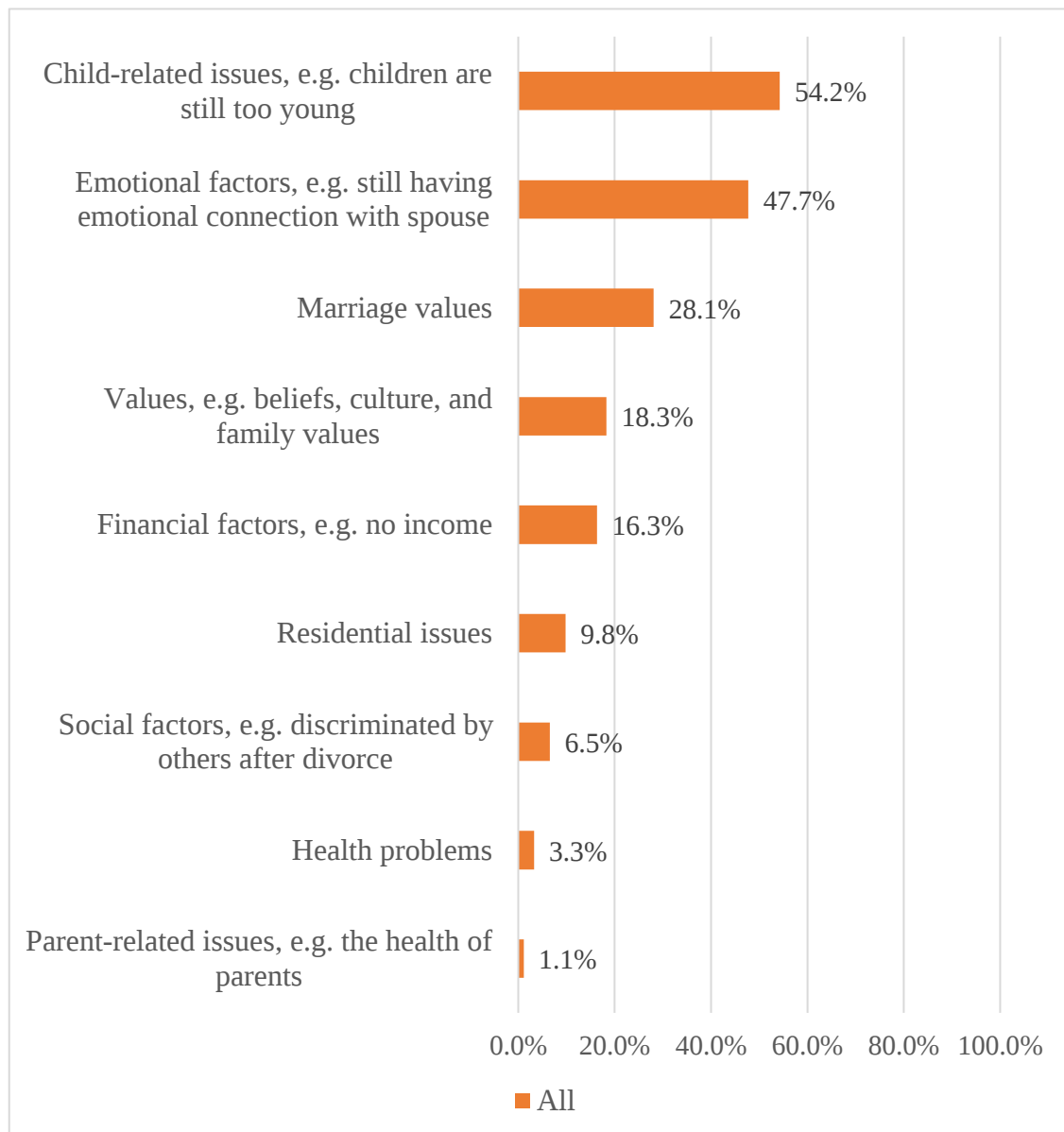
## 5.3 Quantitative Findings

- 5.3.1 In Case Information Form, questions were designed to ask about the reasons for not making decision on divorce for the service users and their spouses. The total number of respondents is 153. In this section, the service users' and their spouses' reasons for not making decision on divorce are presented.

### *Reasons for not Making Decision on Divorce (Service Users)*

- 5.3.2 Around half of the service users had not decided to divorce due to child-related issues (e.g. the children were still too young) (54.2%) and emotional factors (e.g. still having emotional connection with spouse) (47.7%). Other reasons included marriage values (28.1%), values (e.g. beliefs, cultural or family values) (18.3%) and financial factors (e.g. no income) (16.3%), etc.

*Diagram 5.3.1: Reasons for not making decision on divorce (service users)*



- 5.3.3 Analysed by gender, the proportions of the female service users who regarded financial factors (23.0%) or marriage values (34.0%) as the reasons for not making decision on divorce were significantly higher than those of the male service users (financial factors: 3.8%; marriage values: 17.0%).

*Table 5.3.2: Reasons for not making decision on divorce, analysed by gender (service users)*

|                   | Male |        | Female |        |
|-------------------|------|--------|--------|--------|
|                   | N    | %      | N      | %      |
| Financial factors | 2    | 3.8%   | 23     | 23.0%  |
| Marriage values   | 9    | 17.0%  | 34     | 34.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 53   | 100.0% | 100    | 100.0% |

- 5.3.4 Analysed by the result of the case, a significantly higher proportion of the service users who stayed in marriage or reconcile with spouses regarded emotional factors (56.0%) as the reason for not making decision on divorce, when compared to those who decide to divorce (29.3%). This finding implies the service users who still had emotional connection with spouses might be more likely to stay in marriage or reconcile with spouses.

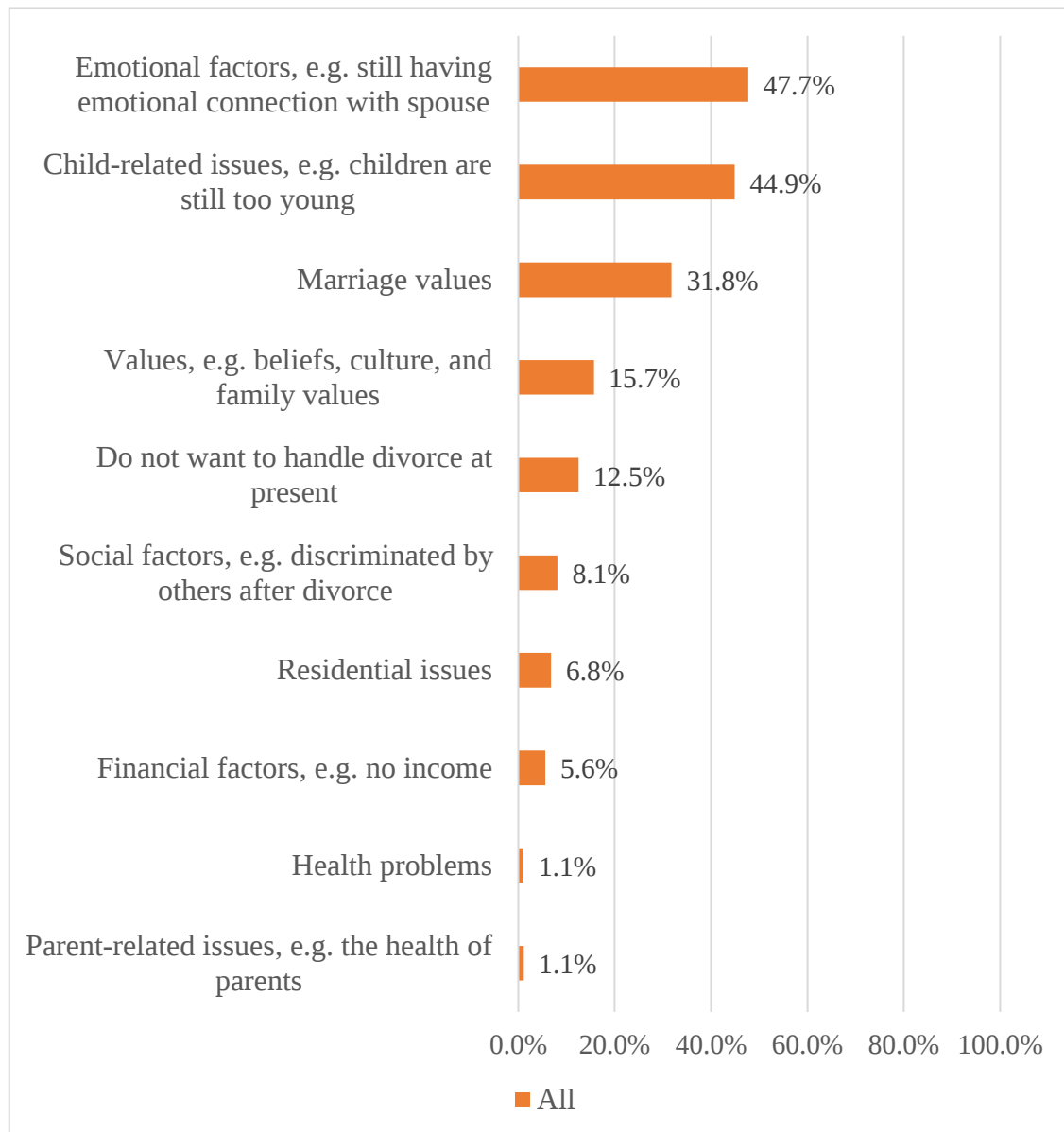
*Table 5.3.3: Reasons for not making decision on divorce, analysed by the result of the case (service users)*

|                   | Decide to divorce |        | Stay in marriage / Reconcile |        |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|
|                   | N                 | %      | N                            | %      |
| Emotional factors | 12                | 29.3%  | 61                           | 56.0%  |
| <b>Total</b>      | 41                | 100.0% | 109                          | 100.0% |

### *Reasons for not Making Decision on Divorce (Spouses)*

5.3.5 The Case Information Form recorded the reasons for not making decision on divorce of more than half (58.2%) of service users' spouses. Nearly half of the spouses had not decided to divorce due to emotional factors (e.g. still having emotional connection with spouse) (47.7%) and child-related issues (e.g. children are still too young) (44.9%). Other reasons included marriage values (31.8%), values (e.g. beliefs, culture, and family values) (15.7%), and not wanting to handle divorce at present (12.5%).

*Diagram 5.3.4: Reasons for not making decision on divorce (spouses)*



## 5.4 Summary

- 5.4.1 The protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage are organised and categorised based on the Ecological model which identifies four different levels of resources that need attention to understand strong, happy, enduring marriages. These four levels are (a) individual level, (b) couple level, and (b) family level.
- 5.4.2 At the individual level, proactive help-seeking behaviours can give the service users and spouses a chance to face and deal with difficulties in marriage. Furthermore, the Project provided the service users with new perspectives on managing their marriage, including recognition of the importance of quality time and reflection on marital problems.
- 5.4.3 At the couple level, the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage include love and commitment, constructive engagement, positive communication, and hopefulness about marriage. From the quantitative data, it is also found that the service users who still had emotional connections (love and commitment) with their spouses might be more likely to stay in marriage or reconcile with spouses.
- 5.4.4 At the family level, family of origin and children's well-being were the key factors to making the decision on preserving marriage. Firstly, positive role models within the family of origin have a significant impact on motivating service users to prioritise unity within their marriages and families. Additionally, the presence of children and the responsibility of raising them often act as a protective factor in preserving marriages.
- 5.4.5 The quantitative data collected by the Case Information Form shows the most common reason for not making decision on divorce among the service users was child-related issues (e.g. children are still too young) (54.2%), followed emotional factors (e.g. still having emotional connection with spouse) (47.7%). Other reasons included values on marriage (28.1%), values (e.g. beliefs, cultural, and family values) (18.3%), financial factors (e.g. no income) (16.3%), etc.
- 5.4.6 Compared to the previous research, proactive help-seeking has emerged as a newly identified protective factor for preserving marriages. This approach provides individuals experiencing marital crises with increased opportunities to reflect upon and resolve their difficulties with the assistance of external sources, such as friends, significant others, and professionals. By actively seeking support and guidance, individuals can gain valuable insights and resources that aid them in navigating challenges and finding effective solutions to preserve their marriage. This recognition of the importance of seeking external help represents a significant advancement in understanding and addressing marital issues.



# Positive Impacts of the Project

## Chapter Six

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Both qualitative method (in-depth interview and focus group discussions) and quantitative method (questionnaire survey) were adopted to evaluate the positive impacts of the Project.

### 6.2 Qualitative Findings

- 6.2.1 In the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion, 21 service users and 7 caseworkers were asked about their views on the positive impacts on service users, children and service users' marital relationship.

#### *Positive Impacts on Service Users*

- 6.2.2 The positive impacts of the Project on service users are categorised in terms of emotional and personal development. For emotional support, the Project could help the service users by facilitating emotional expression and ventilation, providing emotional support and guidance, equipping them with knowledge and skills to manage and regulate emotions, raising awareness of understanding their own emotions and needs, and facilitate the healing of emotional trauma. In terms of personal development, the Project could equip the service users with useful problem-solving skills enhance their self-understanding and foster personal development.

#### **Facilitate Emotional Expression and Ventilation**

- 6.2.3 The service cultivated a comfortable, non-judgmental, and facilitative environment where service users felt at ease to openly share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The presence of an impartial third party, the counselor, played a crucial role in fostering open communication. By lowering preconceived notions and providing a supportive, understanding presence, the counselors created a space where service users could freely express themselves without fear of being criticised or misunderstood. The counselors patiently listened, acknowledged service users' perspectives, and provided affirmation, making them feel heard, validated, and relieved.

*"It was difficult for us as two people to talk (about marital problems) because we had some preconceptions towards each other. When there is a third party among us during the talking, these preconceptions would be lowered and make it easier for us to speak out. Actually, when they (the counselors) respond or agree with what you say, you would feel more comfortable and very gratified."* (我哋兩個好難去講(婚姻問題)，因為我哋對大家都有啲前設。當有個第三方喺中間嘅時候，會減低咗呢啲前設，令我哋容易一啲講出嚟。當佢哋(輔導員)回應你、又或者同意你嘅講法嗰陣，你會覺得舒服一啲，同埋會好欣慰。)(Service user 5, male)

*"Guidance of the counselor was good to make us say more things, and they also taught us some methods (to express ourselves)."*(輔導員嘅引導係好好，會令我哋講多咗好多嘢，同埋會有啲方法會教我哋(去表達自己。))(Service user 19, female)

### **Provide Emotional Support and Guidance**

- 6.2.4 The counseling service extended beyond offering a platform for expression by providing emotional companionship and guidance, particularly during difficult life transitions. The consistent presence and support of the counselors brought a sense of accompaniment and emotional solace to service users navigating challenging times. The counselors offered a listening ear, validated their feelings, and helped them identify their underlying issues. This supportive presence alleviated distress and provided a way out when service users felt aggrieved and misunderstood. The counselors' companionship served as an emotional anchor, preventing service users from reaching breaking points.

*"There was a way out (because of the service) first and foremost. At that time I felt very aggrieved and thought of dying when no one understood me. (The service made me felt that) at least someone would listen to you, and then help you discover your own problems."*((服務令我)第一時間起碼令我有條出路。當時我覺得自己好委屈，亦因為覺得無人明白我而諗住尋死。(服務令我覺得)起碼有人會聽你講，然後幫你去發現自己嘅問題。)(Service user 16, male)

*"They (counselor) gave me some direction, guided me, and helped me relax my emotions...I feel calm now. There were more accusations in the past. I used to have a lot of accusations."*(佢哋(輔導員)都有俾一啲方向我，指引我，幫我去放鬆情緒嘅方法……平心靜氣咗，以前係多啲指責，以前有好多指責嘅。)(Service user 17, female)

## **Equip Service Users with Knowledge and Skills to Manage and Regulate Emotions**

- 6.2.5 The counseling service imparted valuable knowledge and practical skills to service users, empowering them to effectively manage and regulate their emotions. Through counselors' guidance and tailored exercises, individuals gained insights into their emotional patterns and triggers, learning constructive coping strategies to navigate challenging situations. The acquired skills in emotional awareness, communication techniques, and calming practices enabled service users to better understand and control their emotional responses, mitigating conflicts and promoting healthier emotional expression within their relationships. This newfound emotional intelligence fostered a greater sense of self-control and resilience, contributing to improved interpersonal dynamics and overall well-being.

*"Through counseling, we learned how to express our emotions. In fact, the counselor made use of many techniques that allowed us to express our inner worlds. Gradually, we have learnt how to vent our emotions, which we may have suppressed for many years."*(透過輔導，我哋都學識點樣表達情緒。其實輔導員用好多技巧，令我哋可以表達自己嘅內心世界。慢慢我哋都學識點樣宣洩自己嘅情緒，之前可能好多年都壓抑住。)  
(Service user 5, female)

*"Sometimes I really misjudged my own emotions, and it was so hard to reflect myself. But the counselor used their techniques and activities to allow me to gradually face my inner feelings. We explored the origins of my feelings together, and I spoke from the heart. The process was arduous but very therapeutic, and I could let go of my worries properly."*(有陣時，我真係錯判咗我自己嘅情緒，又好難同自己講返。但係輔導員就會用佢哋嘅技巧同活動，等我慢慢咁面對返自己內心嘅感受。我哋會一齊探索我感受嘅來源，等我講出心底話。雖然成個過程係辛苦嘅，但係好療癒嘅，令我可以好好放低自己嘅心事。)(Service user 18, male)

## **Raise Awareness of Understanding Own Emotions and Needs**

- 6.2.6 The counseling service guided service users through a profound exploration of their emotional landscapes, prompting them to confront and understand their true feelings. Through reflective exercises and insightful questioning, counselors facilitated an introspective journey that unveiled long-suppressed emotions and blind spots. This process of self-discovery allowed individuals to gain clarity on their emotional states, fostering a deeper connection with their authentic selves and paving the way for emotional healing and growth.

*"I think there are kind of things should not just pass by casually. Instead, you should return to the right path, which is to confront your own feelings and reflect what hardship and pain you have experienced throughout the journey." (我覺得有啲位唔係就咁隨隨便便過咗去就算。應該要返返去一條正路，就係你要正視返自己嘅感受以及你喺成個過程裡面，究竟有啲咩事令你好辛苦同好痛苦嘅。)* (Service user 11, female)

*"(The reflective exercises and questioning) would serve as trigger points which resonate with you about the behaviours or views that you might ever do or think of before" ((反思練習及提問)會變咗有一個觸發點就係，令你會諗一諗其實自己有冇曾經咁樣做過呢？我嘅心有冇曾經咁樣諗過呢？)* (Service user 13, female)

6.2.7

In addition to fostering emotional awareness, the counseling service empowered service users to identify and acknowledge their innermost needs, which had often been overlooked or neglected. Through thought-provoking exercises and guidance, counselors prompted individuals to reflect on their priorities, values, and unfulfilled desires. This process of self-reflection unveiled blind spots and areas of neglect, allowing service users to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their aspirations and what truly mattered to them.

*"After meeting with the counselor, my wife had important reflection. She was asked to prioritise things in her life. After she wrote them down, the counselor pointed out that she didn't include 'people' in her list – it was all about housework and tasks. My wife then suddenly realised she really did not consider about people. She reflected and suddenly became aware of her own blind spot." (我老婆見完輔導員之後有好重大嘅反思。佢話嗰次輔導員叫佢為生活嘅事排一排序。佢寫完之後，輔導員發現佢寫嘅嘢裏面無寫人，全部都係做家务同做嘢。我老婆先突然發現，原來佢從來冇考慮過寫人，令到佢有一下醒覺到自己嘅盲點。)* (Service user 15, male)

*"I came to clearly understand that a therapist was not there to solve her problems, but to open her heart and understand what she wanted. Now I feel that (counseling) it is a process of self-discovery." (我清楚明白一個心理治療師唔係要幫佢解決問題，而係要佢打開自己個心，明白自己想要嘅嘢。依家覺得(輔導)係認識自我嘅一個過程。)* (Service user 14, female)

## **Facilitate the Healing of Emotional Trauma**

- 6.2.8 The service facilitated the healing of emotional trauma by providing service users with reflective exercises that encourage self-reflections. These activities helped service users confront and verbalise their innermost thoughts and past pains, and thus learn to overcome their past traumatic experiences. By guiding service users through their challenges and aiding the healing of their emotional wounds, the service initiated a journey for service users towards self-healing and prepared them for well-informed decision-making in the future.

*“By reflecting on some past experiences, you may feel that your heart has been scarred. The caseworker helped me with some exercises that I would describe whatever I visualised in my mind to them, and they would ask me if I would say some words to my former self again. I found the process to be quite healing.”* (回想一啲過往經驗嘅時候，可能你會覺得心入面係有啲傷痕嘅，佢（輔導員）中間有幫我做一啲 Exercise（練習），我嘅腦海入面見到啲咩，就描述俾佢聽，又會問我會唔會同我當時嘅自己講返一啲說話。我覺得係一個幾療癒嘅過程。) (Service user 11, female)

*“I think the service allows me to gradually understand myself, acknowledge my own pain, and figure out how to heal myself while also supporting my children. It is only after self-healing that you can gradually start to make decisions.”* (我覺得服務可以俾我慢慢去了解自己，明白自己嘅傷痛，點樣去 healing（治療）自己同時幫助我嘅小朋友。就係 healing（治療）到之後，你先慢慢去做一個決定。) (Service user 21, female)

## **Equip Service Users with Useful Problem-Solving Skills**

- 6.2.9 The service provided various exercises and activities to help service users develop effective problem-solving skills. Through regular reviews and evaluations, service users were able to apply the learned techniques to analyse and understand their problems from different perspectives. This process facilitated a deeper comprehension of the issues they faced and enabled them to explore potential solutions. By encouraging self-reflection and mutual understanding between partners, the service empowered service users with practical tools to navigate challenges and make informed decisions for their relationships.

*"In every session, a significant amount of time was dedicated to reviewing our previous homework-like assignments. We would then evaluate our progress. I felt that the process was closely intertwined, revisiting what happened in each previous session, which provided opportunities for us to apply what we had learned. We were also given time to clearly express ourselves. The counselor utilised numerous different methods to understand our problems. Regarding problem-solving or problem analysis, he would engage us in various exercises, including arguing with each other in order to express our thoughts genuinely and understanding each other by listing our respective strengths and weaknesses."* (每一次見面嗰陣時，會有好多嘅時間放喺重溫之前嘅功課，然後去評估我哋嘅進度。我覺得成個過程一路係好緊扣咁去，重溫之前每一節發生咗咩事，又會俾我哋機會應用學到嘅嘢，仲會留空間俾我哋再去表達清楚。呢一方面，喺理解問題上佢係用咗好多唔同嘅方法。然後喺解決問題或者喺分析問題上面，佢都會有一啲唔同嘅練習同我哋做，包括咗互相嗌交，表達我哋嘅真實諗法，又要寫低對方嘅優缺點。) (Service user 12, male)

### **Enhance Self-understanding**

- 6.2.10 The service significantly contributed to the personal growth and self-understanding of service users, having a pronounced effect on both their individual development and their ability to interact positively with others. As service users engaged with introspective practices, they deepened their understanding of themselves, which in turn promoted a greater capacity for a sense of empathy and flexibility in their relationships. The enhancement of emotional intelligence empowered them to better manage personal challenges and cultivate stronger, more harmonious connections with those around them. The progress not only steered individuals toward self-enhancement but also fostered a nurturing atmosphere for relationships through a sense of mutual understanding.

*"After counseling, I came to understand myself more and realise that sometimes I need to be aware of my emotions as they arise. Once you become conscious of them, you can gain control over them. Gradually I learned to accept and let go. My sense of security has also increased. I was lack of a sense of security, which made me anxious, irritable, negative, and full of resentment."* (輔導完之後我就了解自己多咗，知道應該有時候意識一下自己情緒咩時候嚟咗。當你意識到嘅時候，就可以控制得到。慢慢地我自己學識接受同放開。仲有安全感大咗，因為之前無安全感，所以變得好焦慮、暴躁、負面，仲有好大怨氣。) (Service user 10, female)

*“The concept of the ‘Inner Child’ has helped me to perhaps understand my upbringing in my original family and to know myself better... I realised that I belong to a commanding type of personality because when I was young, everyone would accommodate me... My husband, on the other hand, had to flatter those who were superior to him... He did not dare to speak out and instead equip himself with the ability to read other peoples’ thoughts and searched the ways to survive, so he might be the flattering type of person. Looking back at our relationship, I have become more understanding of my husband and can accept some of his behaviours... Sometimes I might also hurt him.” (「內心小孩」嘅概念幫我了解自己嘅原生家庭成長同了解自己多啲……原來自己係屬於命令型嘅，因為細個嘅時候每個人都遷就我……我先生佢就係要奉承佢上面……佢唔敢講嘢，又要睇眉頭眼額又要識生存之道，所以佢可能係奉承型。睇返我哋嘅關係呢，我會體諒咗我先生，會接受到佢某啲行為…有陣時我可能都會造成某一啲傷害。)* (Service user 21, female)

### *Positive Impacts on Children*

- 6.2.11 This section highlights the perspectives of service users to examine the beneficial effects of the Project on their children. The service was effective in addressing children’s emotional well-being and promoting positive parent-child relationship for some service user.

#### **Provide Emotional Support for Children**

- 6.2.12 The service offered significant benefits to children's emotional well-being by providing activities that they enjoyed and encouraging them to take part in programmes that enhance their confidence and help monitor their emotional state. Tools like books about emotions were utilised by caseworkers to help children articulate their feelings. Through these services, children were able to express deep-seated emotions in a safe environment with play as a usual medium.

*“Some activities were attended only by my daughter, and she liked them a lot. I could not see any emotional problems with the children superficially, but there might be some deeper down in their heart. For my peace of mind, I let the children participate in the programme. The benefit (of the programme) is that it gives confidence to each person, making sure everyone's feelings are fine and focusing on how to help them get through this (divorce).” (有啲活動只有我個女出席，我個女都鍾意。表面上我睇唔到小朋友有情緒問題，但可能心底裏面有嘅，我就穩陣起見等小朋友參與個計劃。(計劃)個好處係俾到信心每一個人，知道大家個心情有冇問題，集中喺點樣過渡呢個事(離婚)。)* (Service user 7, female)

*“If I want to know whether my daughter is happy or not, I will only ask her directly. But it turns out that there are tools and books about emotions available in the market, which the caseworkers will know how to use them to engage with the children and even get them to express their feelings.”* (如果我知道個女嘅情緒開心定唔開心，我淨係識得問。但原來市面上有啲工具書、情緒書，佢哋(輔導員)就會識得同小朋友睇，仲有問到佢哋嘅情緒，表達出嚟。)(Service user 13, female)

- 6.2.13 Caseworkers explained that they focused on addressing children’s anxiety and emotional problems related to parental conflict and separation. After joining the play sessions provided by the service, most children enjoy the programme, and their emotions became more stable.

*“We mainly focus on addressing children’s anxiety and emotional issues due to parental conflicts or separation specialise in handling this aspect.”* (我哋主要係針對佢哋因父母衝突或者分開內心出現焦慮不安可能出現咗情緒問題。)(Caseworker 3)

- 6.2.14 In line with service users' feedback, caseworkers observed that children were happy during their participation in the service. This could be attributed to the environment in which children were able to express themselves freely and establish connections with peers who had similar experiences.

*“Some children who participated in our group expressed their enjoyment and happiness. They appreciate the activities within the group that allow them to express themselves in front of other children who can relate to them, helping them realise that they are not alone.”* (有啲小朋友參加咗小組，都話好鍾意，覺得好開心。(小組)裏面嘅活動可以俾佢哋同其他有共鳴嘅小朋友面前表達，發現佢哋唔係孤單嘅。)(Caseworker 1)

*“Some children would dismantle our figures when they came. Actually the figure could represent themselves. After a while he was better and more emotionally stable.”* (曾經遇過有小朋友之前嚟嘅時候經常肢解我哋嘅figure (模型)，其實嗰個figure係代表佢自己，但佢整壞咗。後來佢情況好咗好多，情緒穩定咗。)(Caseworker 2)

## **Improve Parent-child Relationships**

- 6.2.15 The service played a vital role in improving the parent-child relationships of some cases by providing a safe space for children to express their emotions. Initially harboring unvoiced anger and hurt, the children gradually opened up about their deep-seated feelings and experiences through the service. This process not only helped them in their therapeutic journey but also improved communication with their parent who could restore trust and confidence in the parental role.

*“When my children came, their emotions were very poor because they did not dare to talk to me. I realised they had already been deeply hurt when I found out. Luckily, they had the chance to receive therapy here, and I could see they slowly reveal their secrets that they could not share before. Through the service, they could talk to the caseworkers about their worries, and after talking, their situations had improved. They gradually built up trust with me and started to tell me about things that their father had done when I was not around. They needed a safe place to speak out, and after doing so, they released their stress.”* (我小朋友嚟嘅時候情緒係好差嘅，因為佢哋唔敢同我講。我知道嘅時候，我發現佢哋已經好受傷。好彩我小朋友亦有機會嚟呢度做治療，我係睇住佢哋進步，慢慢將呢啲唔可以講出嚟嘅秘密講出嚟。佢係透過服務可以去同輔導員講佢嘅心事，講完之後佢應該有改善，感覺到慢慢對媽媽呢個角色有信心，慢慢同我講返我唔在場嘅時候，爸爸做咗啲咩嘢。佢哋需要一個安全嘅地方去講出黎，講出嚟之後佢哋釋放咗壓力。)(Service user 11, female)

- 6.2.16 In some cases, children might develop intense hostility towards their parents. Within the context of play therapy, caseworkers actively addressed and worked on improving the relationship between the children and the parent towards whom they harbor hostility. Caseworkers also assisted in conveying the children's messages to their parents, if deemed appropriate, which helped enhance the parent-child relationship.

*“Sometimes, children exhibited extreme hostility towards one party, and within the context of play therapy, we dealt with the relationship between the child and that specific party. If there was anything they want to express, the child could communicate through us as a messenger to their parents.”* (有時小朋友對某一方極度敵視，喺遊戲治療入面我哋都會處理小朋友同某一方嘅關係。如果有咩要表達小朋友可以同父母講，我哋做一個傳話嘅角色。)(Caseworker 2)

## *Positive Impacts on Marital Relationship*

- 6.2.17 This section highlights the positive impacts of the Project on the service user's marital relationship. The Project could assist service users in enhancing communication with their spouses, have a reflection on marital relationships and going through the decision-making process of marital relationships with the assistance of caseworkers.

### **Assist Service Users in Enhancing Spousal Communication**

- 6.2.18 The service played a pivotal role in enhancing communication between spouses. Through counseling exercises and guidance, couples were encouraged to engage in open and honest dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives and needs. This improved communication allowed partners to articulate their thoughts and feelings more effectively, reducing misunderstandings and promoting mutual understanding. The service empowered couples to actively listen and respond to each other's concerns, paving the way for more constructive and meaningful conversations.

*"The biggest change in my wife is that she really talked a lot more. She would explain to me one by one the things she did not like (about me). I felt that she was willing to express herself at least in the whole communication process." (太太最大嘅改變係佢真係講多咗好多嘢，佢會同我逐一解釋佢唔鐘意(我做)嘅事。咁我覺得佢起碼喺成個溝通嘅過程當中願意嘗試去表達自己。)* (Service user 12, male)

*"[The counselor] would guide her to express those feelings. This allowed us to articulate our deepest thoughts. We often tended to hold back and did not express the most genuine feelings in the past."((輔導員)會捉住引導佢(太太)，去講出一啲感受，從而可以幫我哋表達到心底入面最深層嘅想法。以往我哋喺傾偈個時都會修飾咗自己嘅講法，無表達到最真實嘅諗法出來。)* (Service user 15, male)

- 6.2.19 From the perspective of a caseworker, they emphasised the importance of deconstructing negative communication patterns and manifest the good intentions of the couple in order to mend marital relationship. During the communications between spouses in marital crisis, those spouses usually held negative assumptions about each other, thereby leading to arguments and relationship deterioration. In view of this, caseworkers assisted in revealing and channeling the hidden good intentions of spouses towards each other. This method could unfold the miscommunications of spouses and was beneficial to the marital well-being of the service users.

*“If there is a real chance of saving the relationship, it involves deconstructing their negative communication patterns. Another important aspect, in my opinion, is manifesting their good intentions. In their communication, they often have preconceived impressions of each other. For example, one may perceive the other as lazy or lacking of responsibility, but they don't realise that their own perspective is biased. Their good intentions are often hidden during communication and go unnoticed by the other person. During counseling, we can help the service users discover the positive motives of their partner. By offering them new perspectives, they can regain hope for their marriage. On-the-spot deconstruction of these messages is incredibly helpful.”* (如果真係有機會挽救嘅話，就係拆解佢哋負面溝通嘅風格。仲有我覺得重要嘅個個位置係要將佢哋嘅善意放大。因為喺佢哋嘅溝通當中，成日都會有對對方有啲既定嘅印象。譬如佢覺得對方係懶嘅或者對方無責任感，但係佢哋其實唔知道，原來自己嘅角度其實係偏頗嘅。喺溝通入面其實佢哋嘅善意係自己埋藏咗之餘，對方亦都睇唔到。輔導嘅時候就可以幫服務使用者發現返對方良好嘅動機。就好似俾咗個新嘅睇法俾佢哋，佢哋都會對婚姻更有盼望。即場拆解呢啲訊息，其實幫助係最大嘅。)(Caseworker 2)

### **Facilitate Self-reflection on Marital relationship**

- 6.2.20 The service provided a safe and impartial environment for couples to reflect deeply on their relationship dynamics and underlying issues. Through guided discussions and exercises, service users were encouraged to openly share their perspectives, feelings, and concerns. This process facilitated a deeper understanding of the root causes of their marital conflicts, allowing them to gain clarity on the profound differences and challenges they faced. The non-judgmental approach empowered individuals to confront difficult realities and make informed decisions about the future of their relationship, whether it involved reconciliation or separation. By creating a space for open communication and self-reflection, the service helped couples become acutely aware of their marital problems and supported them in reaching a resolution that aligned with their needs and values.

*"During the process, I was able to reflect on our entire journey of the relationship I vividly remember the incident when I contracted COVID, and my husband did not take care of me; instead, he called the fire department to take me away. That event made me cry for days. When the caseworker heard about it, she suggested we could try mediation. I realised that our differences were profound, and the core issue was that he kicked me out without discussing it with me. I was deeply hurt, and I accepted that our relationship had reached this point." (中間係有幫你回想返成段感情，俾空間我去諗清楚。我好記得嘅，舊年我中咗 covid (新冠肺炎)，咁我先生無照顧我，佢報消防拉我走，咁呢年我都喊咗幾日幾夜。姑娘聽到之後就話，你哋可以調解架喇。我知道我哋個分歧就係咁大，個問題係你無同我講就踢我走，我就無同佢講嘢喇，我係好傷心嘅，我就接受我哋嘅關係係咁囉。)* (Service user 3, female)

*'It was necessary to reach to a consensus, that if we chose not to separate, we would receive counseling. If we chose divorce, we would receive mediation service. In reality, she was not changed, and the chance of divorce was very high. Even after eight sessions, we could not find a position where both parties could agree, leaving no other way out, because she insisted on her stance that she has invested so much (on this relationship).'" (要攞個共識，如果係揀唔分開，我哋就會跳入去輔導；如果選擇咗離婚，就去調解。變咗其實佢唔改變，離婚嘅機會一定好大，講到尾喺八堂入面，都攞唔到大家可以認同嘅個一條出路，因為佢會堅持自己(係呢段關係當中)付出咗咁多。)* (Service user 13, female)

### **Assist Service Users in Going Through the Decision-Making Process for Marital Crisis**

- 6.2.21 The caseworkers played a critical role in helping the service users to go through the decision-making process for marital crisis. As indicated by some service users, the caseworkers could find comfort in caseworkers for accompanying them to go through decision-making process and provide assistance to them whenever necessary.

*"I felt that the counselor could really accompanied with me throughout the divorce process. I have sought help from one counselor after another, probably for a spiritual sustenance."*(我覺得姑娘(輔導員)真係能夠陪著我去走過呢一段離婚嘅過程。我是一個接著一個咁去見姑娘，搵佢哋幫手，可能係為咗一個心靈上嘅寄託。)(Service user 13, female)

- 6.2.22 A service user expressed that with the accompany of caseworkers, she felt her agency to contemplate her marital relationship and make decision.

*"As for the means of separation, I will definitely do it. But the problem is sooner or later and you need to find a suitable time to do it...when you break through this process, you will have a kind of power inside yourself. A new self appears. Feel that nothing can trouble me anymore."*(至於分居呢個手段，做就一定會做，係遲同早嘅問題，係要搵一個合適嘅時機去做……當你衝破咗呢個過程之後，你就會有一種力量喺裏面，再重新有一個新嘅自己出現，就會覺得無咩事可以難倒我喇。)(Service user 11, female)

- 6.2.23 From the perspective of caseworkers, they considered it to be meaningful and important to help the service users go through decision-making of their marital relationship which was often painful and difficult. While they were glad to see some of the couples repair their marriage and stay in the relationship, they also thought that it was critical for them to encourage the users to make the decisions of divorces and overcome the sufferings from their relationships.

*"It is positive that many couples see hopes in their marriages and know they could repair their relationship. But I also find it meaningful to accompany some couples to make difficult decisions and muster the courage to take the step towards divorce when their marriage have reached a painful stage. I feel that our roles of accompanying them in making these decisions are very significant."*(我哋見到正面嘅係，有好多夫婦喺婚姻裏面，見到有希望，以及可以再去修復關係，但另外亦有啲案件其實去到一個婚姻好痛苦嘅階段。我覺得可以去陪伴佢哋去做到一個好唔容易嘅決定，亦係好有意思嘅，可以令佢哋拎出勇氣走出離婚嘅一步。我覺得我哋作為一個陪伴去做決定嘅角色。呢個都是一個很重要嘅事。)(Caseworker 4)

## 6.3 Quantitative Findings

- 6.3.1 Two kinds of questionnaires, namely Evaluation Form of Counseling Service (**Annex IV**) and Evaluation Form of Activities (one of the examples is in **Annex V**), were used to evaluate the positive impacts of the Project.

### *Evaluation Form of Counseling Services*

- 6.3.2 Evaluation Form of Counseling Services was administered by caseworkers to ask for service users' responses after providing counseling service to them. Questions were set up to understand the perceived impacts of the counseling services on service users and the most impressive learnings gained by service users in the counseling service. In total, the responses from 166 parents and 44 children were collected. During the period of September 2021 to September 2023.

### **Parents' Choices of Handling Marital Difficulties**

- 6.3.3 Three questions were designed to ask whether the parents recognised more choices of handling marital difficulties and had thoughtful decision on divorce.
- 6.3.4 Among the 125 parents who provided responses, the majority (77.6%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they had once allowed themselves more time to consider decision to divorce. 13.6% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 8.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 6.3.5 Among the 130 parents who provided responses, the vast majority (92.3%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to broaden their thinking through different perspectives before making the decision to divorce. 4.6% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 3.1% disagreed.
- 6.3.6 Among the 131 parents who provided responses, most (84.0%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to give their marriages one more chance. 12.2% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 3.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Table 6.3.1: Parents' choices of handling marital difficulties (%)*

|                                                                                                                       | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| I have once allowed myself more time to consider the decision to divorce.<br>(n=125)                                  | 46.4%                 | 31.2%        | 13.6%          | 4.8%            | 4.0%                     |
| Before making the decision to divorce, I am willing to broaden my thinking through different perspectives.<br>(n=130) | 60.8%                 | 31.5%        | 4.6%           | 3.1%            | 0.0%                     |
| I am willing to try to give my marriage one more chance.<br>(n=131)                                                   | 54.2%                 | 29.8%        | 12.2%          | 2.3%            | 1.5%                     |

### **Parents' Communication with Spouse**

- 6.3.7 Two questions were designed to ask whether the parents improved their communication with spouses.
- 6.3.8 Among the 133 parents who provided responses, about two-thirds (66.9%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they had an initial understanding of the communication patterns between themselves and their spouses. 27.1% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 6.0% disagreed.
- 6.3.9 Among the 135 parents who provided responses, nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they recognised the ways to reduce conflicts with their spouses. 27.4% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 7.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Table 6.3.2: Parents' Communication with Spouses*

|                                                                                                        | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| I have an initial understanding of the communication patterns between myself and my spouse.<br>(n=133) | 27.8%                 | 39.1%        | 27.1%          | 6.0%            | 0.0%                     |
| I recognise the ways to reduce conflicts with my spouse.<br>(n=135)                                    | 23.0%                 | 42.2%        | 27.4%          | 6.7%            | 0.7%                     |

### **Parents' Recognition of Divorce's Impacts on Children**

- 6.3.10 Two questions were designed to understand the parents' recognition of divorce's impacts on children.
- 6.3.11 Among the 136 parents who provided responses, the overwhelming majority (97.1%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they considered the impact on their children when they thought about divorce. 2.2% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 0.7% strongly disagreed.
- 6.3.12 Among the 133 parents who provided responses, the vast majority (90.2%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the impact of parental divorce on children's developmental and emotional health. 7.5% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 2.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Table 6.3.3: Parents' Recognition of Divorce's Impacts on Children*

|                                                                                                          | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| When I think about divorce, I consider the impact on my children.<br>(n=136)                             | 78.7%                 | 18.4%        | 2.2%           | 0.0%            | 0.7%                     |
| I understand the impact of parental divorce on children's developmental and emotional health.<br>(n=133) | 62.4%                 | 27.8%        | 7.5%           | 0.8%            | 1.5%                     |

### **Parents' Satisfaction with the Service**

- 6.3.13 Two questions were designed to understand parents' satisfaction with the counseling service. All the 166 service users who were parents answered these questions. The overwhelming majority (94.0%) of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that the counseling service was helpful to them. 4.2% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 1.8% disagreed.
- 6.3.14 The overwhelming majority (95.2%) of the parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the counseling service. 3.0% of the parents expressed neutral attitude and 1.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Table 6.3.4: Parents' satisfaction with the service*

|                                                                 | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Overall, the counseling service is helpful to me.<br>(n=166)    | 69.9%                 | 24.1%        | 4.2%           | 1.8%            | 0.0%                     |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the counseling service.<br>(n=166) | 71.1%                 | 24.1%        | 3.0%           | 1.2%            | 0.6%                     |

### **Parents' Most Impressive Learnings**

- 6.3.15 Besides, in the evaluation form, an open-ended question was designed to ask the parents about the most impressive learnings gained in the counseling service. The responses of the parents were coded and counted. The most impressive learnings are listed as follows:

*Table 6.3.5: The most impressive learnings gained by the parents*

| <b>Learning</b>                                         | <b>Frequency</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Enhance self-awareness and personal growth              | 89               |
| Improve communication methods and express feelings      | 57               |
| Try to think from spouse's perspective                  | 56               |
| Try to resolve difficulties in relationships            | 32               |
| Gain a deeper understanding of relationship development | 15               |
| Release and manage emotions                             | 14               |
| Deepen intimacy and connection with spouse              | 12               |
| Have a clearer understanding of future choices          | 11               |
| Understand the impact of childhood growth               | 10               |
| Feel more confident/hopeful to face the future          | 3                |

### **Perceived Impacts on Children**

- 6.3.16 Moreover, five questions were designed to collect the responses of 44 children about the perceived impacts on them.
- 6.3.17 Nearly two-thirds (65.9%) of children agreed or strongly agreed that they had fewer emotional or behavioural problems. 31.8% of children expressed neutral attitude and 2.3% disagreed.
- 6.3.18 Half (50.0%) of children agreed or strongly agreed that they had more confidence to face family adversity. 47.7% of children expressed neutral attitude and 2.3% disagreed.
- 6.3.19 Vast majority (93.2%) of children agreed or strongly agreed that they felt emotionally relieved and less stressed. 4.5% of children expressed neutral attitude and 2.3% disagreed.
- 6.3.20 More than half (63.7%) of children agreed or strongly agreed that they learned more techniques to sooth their emotions. 36.4% of children expressed neutral attitude.

- 6.3.21 Vast majority (90.9%) of children agreed or strongly agreed that they were very satisfied after participating in the counseling. 9.1% of children expressed neutral attitude.

*Table 6.3.6: Perceived impacts on children*

|                                                                                           | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly disagree</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| I have fewer emotional/behavioural problems.                                              | 11.4%                 | 54.5%        | 31.8%          | 2.3%            | 0.0%                     |
| I have more confidence to face family adversity.                                          | 9.1%                  | 40.9%        | 47.7%          | 2.3%            | 0.0%                     |
| I feel emotionally relieved and less stressed.                                            | 9.1%                  | 84.1%        | 4.5%           | 2.3%            | 0.0%                     |
| I learned more techniques to soothe my emotions.                                          | 11.4%                 | 52.3%        | 36.4%          | 0.0%            | 0.0%                     |
| After participating in the counseling, it was very helpful to me and I am very satisfied. | 27.3%                 | 63.6%        | 9.1%           | 0.0%            | 0.0%                     |

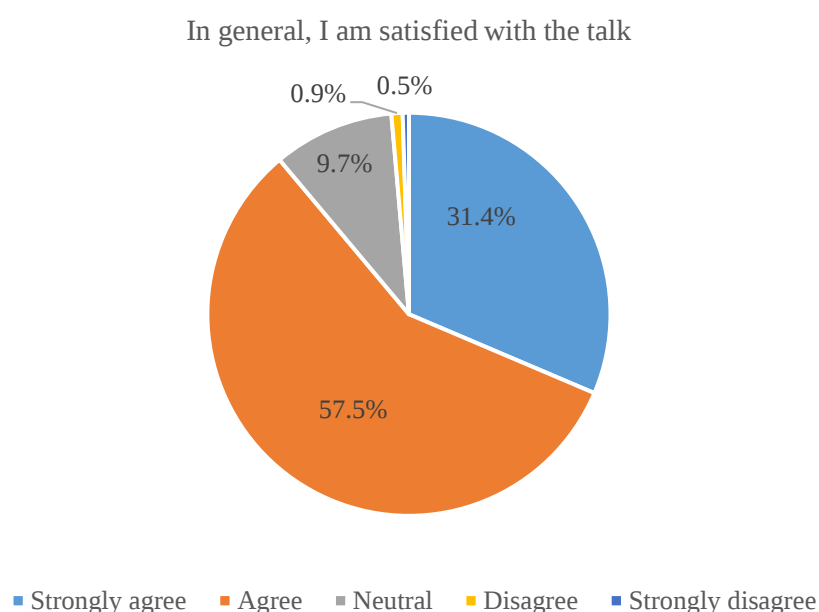
## *Evaluation Form of Activities*

- 6.3.22 Evaluation Form of Activities was a self-administered questionnaire which aims to capture the views of the service users on two major kinds of activities, including talks (such as “「家事調解及婚姻再思」專業服務介紹講座”, etc.) and groups (such as “「心心相印愛孩子」親子關係小組”, “「童情深」兒童小組”, “「愛與痛的邊緣」家長小組”, etc.). The items collected include service users’ satisfaction with the activities, the helpfulness of the activities, and the knowledge and skills acquisition of the service users.
- 6.3.23 In total, 424 responses on talks and 185 responses on groups were collected via questionnaire surveys, during the period of August 2021 and June 2023.

### **Satisfaction with Activities**

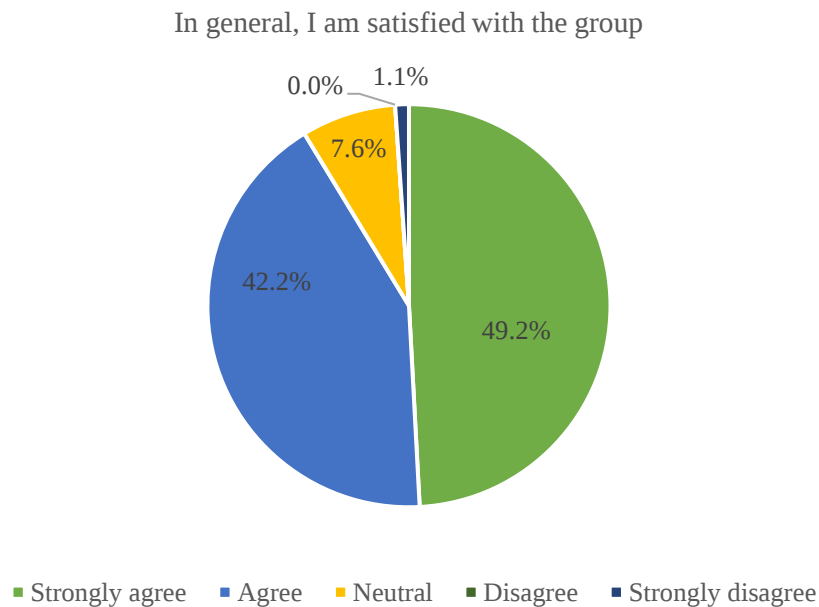
- 6.3.24 Among the 424 responses, the majority (88.9%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the talks in general. 9.7% of responses were neutral and only 1.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Diagram 6.3.7: Satisfaction with talks*



- 6.3.25 Among the 185 responses, the vast majority (91.4%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the groups in general. 7.6% of responses were neutral and only 1.1% strongly disagreed.

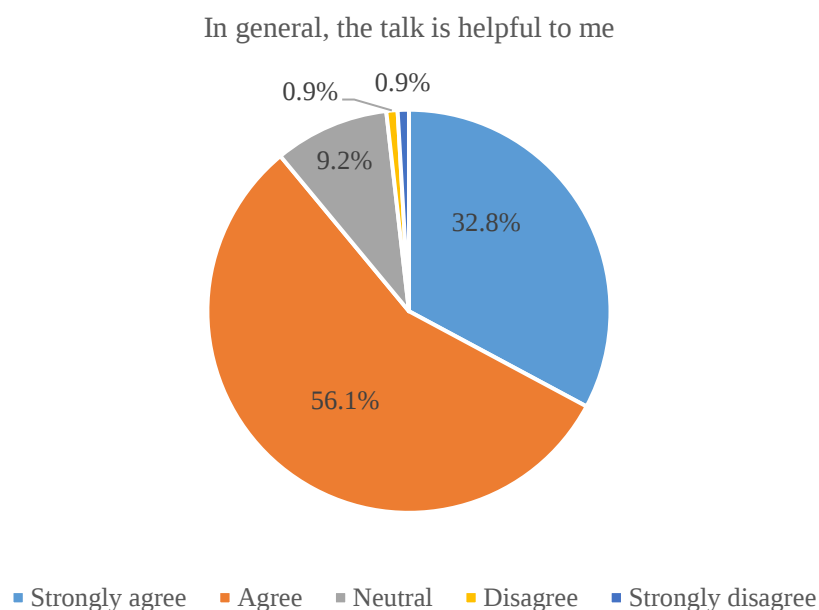
*Diagram 6.3.8: Satisfaction with groups*



### **Helpfulness of Activities**

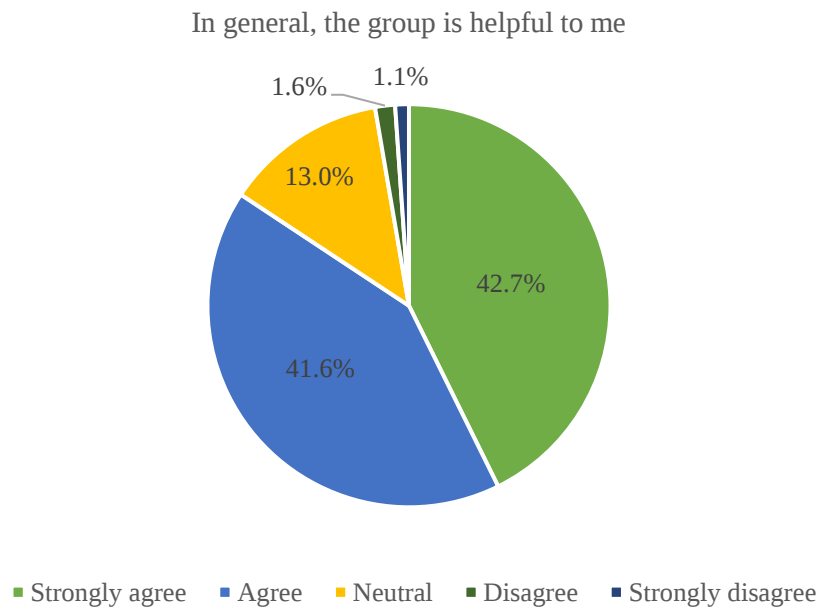
- 6.3.26 Among the 424 responses, the majority (88.9%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that the talks were helpful to them. 9.2% of responses were neutral and only 1.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Diagram 6.3.9: Helpfulness of talks*



- 6.3.27 Among the 185 responses, most (84.3%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that the groups were helpful to them. 13.0% of responses were neutral and only 2.7% strongly disagreed.

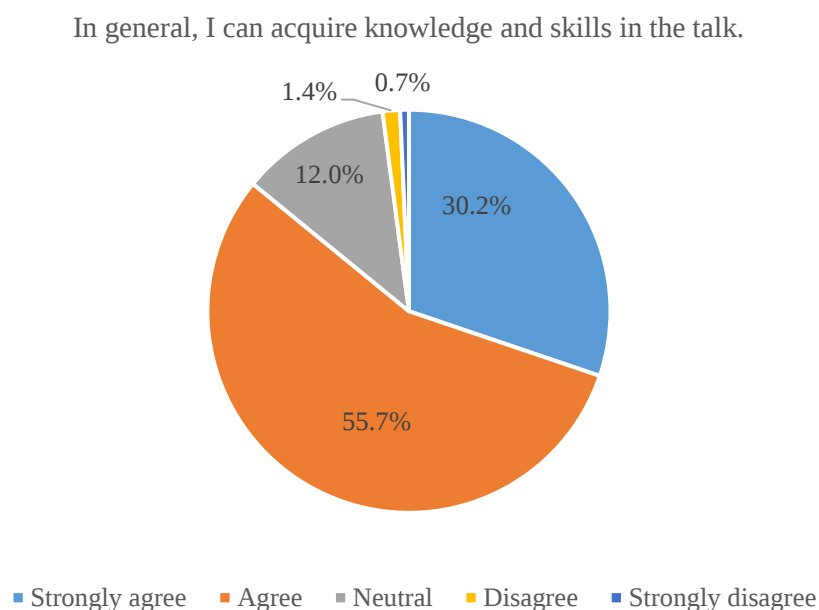
*Diagram 6.3.10: Helpfulness of groups*



### **Knowledge and Skills Acquisition**

- 6.3.28 Among the 424 responses, the majority (85.9%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they could acquire knowledge and skills in the talks. 12.0% of responses were neutral and only 2.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

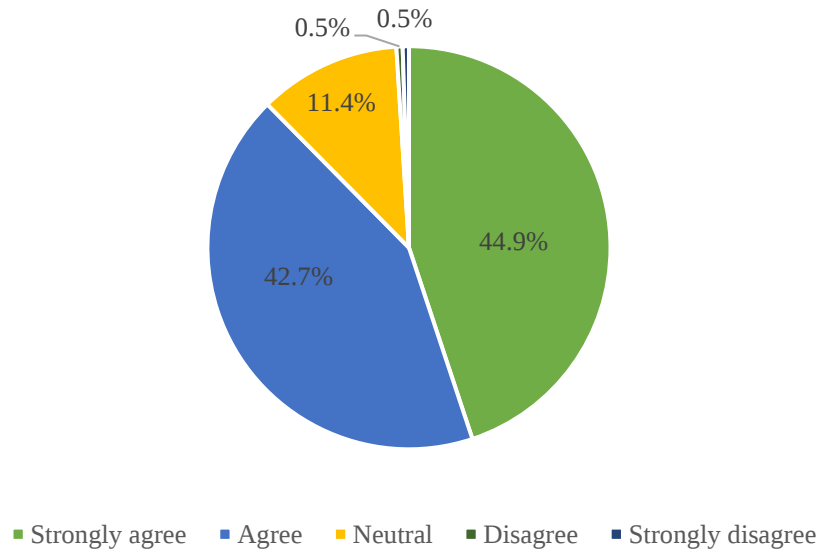
*Diagram 6.3.11: Knowledge and skills acquisition in talks*



6.3.29 Among the 185 responses, the majority (87.6%) of them agreed or strongly agreed that they could acquire knowledge and skills in the groups. 11.4% of responses were neutral and only 1.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

*Diagram 6.3.12: Knowledge and skills acquisition in groups*

In general, I can acquire knowledge and skills in the group.



## 6.4 Summary

- 6.4.1. The services of the Project had positive impacts on the service users, their children and marital relationship.
- 6.4.2. The positive impacts of the Project on service users are categorised in terms of emotional and personal development. For emotional support, the Project could help the service users by facilitating emotional expression and ventilation, providing emotional support and guidance, equipping them with knowledge and skills to manage and regulate emotions, raising awareness of understanding their own emotions and needs, and facilitate the healing of emotional trauma. In terms of personal development, the Project could equip the service users with useful problem-solving skills enhance their self-understanding and foster personal development.
- 6.4.3. Considering the impacts on children, the Project was effective in addressing children's emotional well-being and promoting positive parent-child relationships for some service users.
- 6.4.4. Regarding the impacts on marital relationships, the Project could assist service users in enhancing communication with their spouses, have a reflection on marital relationships and going through the decision-making process of marital relationships with the assistance of caseworkers.
- 6.4.5. Besides, the findings of Evaluation Form of Counseling Services showed that the majority of the services users could recognised more choices of handling marital difficulties by allowing themselves to have time to consider the decision to divorce (77.6%), being willing to broaden their thinking through different perspectives before making the decision to divorce (92.3%) and being willing to give their marriages one more chance (84.0%). Also, it was found that more half of the service users improve their communication with spouses by having an initial understanding of the communication patterns between themselves and their spouses (66.9%) and recognising the ways to reduce conflicts with their spouses (65.2%).
- 6.4.6. Moreover, the majority of the service users had recognised the impacts of divorce on their children. The overwhelming majority (97.1%) of them would consider the impact on their children when they thought about divorce, while the vast majority (90.2%) of them understood the impacts of divorce on the developmental and emotional health of children. In general, the service users recognised the positive impacts of the counseling service on them. The overwhelming majority of them thought the service was helpful to them (94.0%) and were satisfied with the service (95.2%). The vast majority (90.9%) of the children, on the other hand, stated that they were very satisfied after participating in the counseling and thought that it was very helpful to them.
- 6.4.7. Apart from counseling, there were other activities, such as talks, workshops, and groups, in the Project. The findings of Evaluation Form – Activities displayed that overwhelming majority of the service users were satisfied with the talks (88.9%) and the groups (91.4%) organised by the Project. Similarly, the vast majority thought that the activities was helpful to them (88.9%) and assisted them to acquire knowledge and skills (85.8%).



## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Chapter Seven

#### 7.1 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 This Study aims to explore the factors leading to divorce ideation, protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage, and the positive impacts of the Jockey Club “Give Marriage a Chance” Project and provide insights into the service enhancement and share the study findings with multi-disciplinary professionals through research sharing seminar. The target respondents of the study include service users of the Project, and caseworkers who provided services in the Project.
- 7.1.2 To achieve the above aims, mixed data collection methods were adopted. Qualitative views were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and quantitative information was gathered by questionnaire survey.

##### *Factors Leading to Divorce Ideation*

- 7.1.3 The factors leading to divorce ideation are organised and categorised by using the Ecological model. Four levels of factors are identified, namely (a) individual level, (b) couple level, (c) family level and (d) societal level.
- 7.1.4 At the individual level, it is found that unreasonable behaviours (i.e. controlling behaviours, aggressive behaviours, gambling), extramarital and pre-marital affairs, emotional problems, unmet spousal expectations, gender and family values from the family of origin, differences in values, and difference in sexual orientation were the factors leading to divorce ideation.
- 7.1.5 At the couple level, various factors could lead to divorce ideation of the service users, including communication problems, weak pre-marriage bonding, inability to resolve conflicts, weak intimacy and sexual dissatisfaction.
- 7.1.6 At the family level, the change in family life cycle due to childbearing, different parenting styles and parent-child triangulation conflicts, as well as in-law conflicts from the extended families were the factors associated with divorce ideation.
- 7.1.7 At the societal level, traditional perception of gender roles and COVID-19 pandemic could adversely affect marital relationships of couples.

- 7.1.8 Besides, the quantitative findings of the Case Information Form displayed that the most prevalent factors leading to divorce ideation among the service users were communication problems (78.4%), followed by extramarital affairs (36.6%), temperamental incompatibility (34.0%), differences in child-rearing and parenting (28.1%) and differences in values (27.5%). Other factors included mental health problems (24.2%), verbal violence (20.9%), in-law conflicts (17.6%), etc. Analysed by gender, female service users were more likely to consider divorce due to communication problems and differences in values, when compared to male service users. Besides, service users who had divorced family members were more likely to think of divorce because of differences in child-rearing and parenting.

### *Protective Factors Leading to Decide on Preserving Marriage*

- 7.1.9 The protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage are organised and categorised based on the Ecological model which identifies three different levels of resources that need attention to understand strong, happy, enduring marriages. These three levels are (a) individual level, (b) couple level, and (c) family level.
- 7.1.10 At the individual level, proactive help-seeking behaviours can give the service users and spouses a chance to face and deal with difficulties in marriage. Furthermore, the Project provided the service users with new perspectives on managing their marriage, including recognition of the importance of quality time and reflection on marital problems.
- 7.1.11 At the couple level, the protective factors leading to decide on preserving marriage include love and commitment, constructive engagement, positive communication, and hopefulness about marriage. From the quantitative data, it is also found that the service users who still had emotional connections (love and commitment) with their spouses might be more likely to stay in marriage or reconcile with spouses.
- 7.1.12 At the family level, family of origin and children's well-being were the key factors to making the decision on preserving marriage. Firstly, positive role models within the family of origin have a significant impact on motivating service users to prioritise unity within their marriages and families. Additionally, the presence of children and the responsibility of raising them often act as a protective factor in preserving marriages.
- 7.1.13 The quantitative data collected by the Case Information Form shows the most common reason for not making decision on divorce among the service users was child-related issues (e.g. children are still too young) (54.2%), followed emotional factors (e.g. still having emotional connection with spouse) (47.7%). Other reasons included values on marriage (28.1%), values (e.g. beliefs, cultural, and family values) (18.3%), financial factors (e.g. no income) (16.3%), etc.

### *Positive impacts of the Project*

- 7.1.14 The services of the Project had positive impacts on the service users, their children and marital relationship.
- 7.1.15 The positive impacts of the Project on the service users are categorised in terms of emotional and personal development. For emotional support, the Project could help the service users by facilitating emotional expression and ventilation, providing emotional support and guidance, equipping them with knowledge and skills to manage and regulate emotions, raising awareness of understanding their own emotions and needs, and facilitate the healing of emotional trauma. In terms of personal development, the Project could equip the service users with useful problem-solving skills enhance their self-understanding and foster personal development.
- 7.1.16 Considering the impacts on children, the Project was effective in addressing children's emotional well-being and promoting positive parent-child relationships for some service users.
- 7.1.17 Regarding the impacts on marital relationship, the Project could assist service users in enhancing communication with their spouses, have a reflection on marital relationships and going through the decision-making process of marital relationships with the assistance of caseworkers.
- 7.1.18 Besides, the findings of Evaluation Form of Counseling Services showed that the majority of the services users could recognised more choices of handling marital difficulties by allowing themselves to have time to consider the decision to divorce (77.6%), being willing to broaden their thinking through different perspectives before making the decision to divorce (92.3%) and being willing to give their marriages one more chance (84.0%). Also, it was found that more half of the service users improve their communication with spouses by having an initial understanding of the communication patterns between themselves and their spouses (66.9%), and recognising the ways to reduce conflicts with their spouses (65.2%).
- 7.1.19 Moreover, the majority of the service users had recognised the impacts of divorce on their children. The overwhelming majority (97.1%) of them would consider the impact on their children when they thought about divorce, while the vast majority (90.2%) of them understood the impacts of divorce on the developmental and emotional health of children. In general, the service users recognised the positive impacts of the counseling service on them. The overwhelming majority of them thought the service was helpful to them (94.0%) and were satisfied with the service (95.2%). The vast majority (90.9%) of the children, on the other hand, stated that they were very satisfied after participating in the counseling and thought that it was very helpful to them.
- 7.1.20 Apart from counseling, there were other activities, such as talks, workshops, and groups, in the Project. The findings of Evaluation From – Activities displayed that overwhelming majority of the service users were satisfied with the talks (88.9%) and the groups (91.4%) organised by the Project. Similarly, the vast majority thought that the activities was helpful to them (88.9%) and assisted them to acquire knowledge and skills (85.8%).

## 7.2 Recommendations

- 7.2.1 Based on the findings of the Study, the research team put forward several recommendations at both the service level and community level. At the service level, it is recommended to develop specific methods and interventions that address the identified risk factors and protective factors associated with divorce, enhance service development, conduct professional capacity-building programmes and carry out a follow-up study on the long-term impacts of the Project. Besides, facilitating community education initiatives can also raise awareness about the importance of seeking help early, and expand knowledge and understanding in this area. At the community level, the research team suggests establishing collaborations among social service providers and increasing funding for divorce decision counseling services.
- 7.2.2 By implementing these recommendations at both the service and community levels, it is hoped that greater support and resources can be provided to individuals and couples experiencing marital difficulties, ultimately working towards the preservation and strengthening of marriages.

### *Develop Specific Methods and Interventions*

- 7.2.3 The findings from the in-depth interviews and Case Information Form highlighted several risk factors associated with divorce, such as communication problems, extramarital affairs, temperamental incompatibility, differences in child-rearing and parenting, unreasonable behaviours and differences in values. On the other hand, factors leading to decide on preserving marriage included child-related issues, love and commitment, and emotional factors, as well as marriage values.
- 7.2.4 In light of these findings, it is essential for the service team to develop corresponding methods that effectively reduce the impacts of the identified risk factors and enhance the impacts of protective factors. Drawing from their experience of working with couples on the verge of marital crisis, the service team can devise targeted interventions and strategies. For instance, to address communication problems, the service team can provide couples with communication skills training and teach conflict resolution techniques. In the case of extramarital affairs, the service team can offer counseling and support to address the underlying issues and rebuild trust within the relationship. For differences in child-rearing and parenting, the team can provide guidance on effective co-parenting strategies and facilitate open dialogue to find common ground.
- 7.2.5 Moreover, some service users expressed that they encountered aggressive behaviours of their spouses towards them and their children. In view of this, the service team can conduct risk assessment on the risk of domestic violence encountered by the cases and adopt appropriate measures to ensure the safety of those service users and their children.

- 7.2.6 Additionally, the service team can work on strengthening the protective factors by promoting healthy relationship values and emphasizing the importance of love, commitment, and emotional connection within the marriage. They can also provide resources and support for couples dealing with child-related issues, ensuring the well-being of the entire family unit.
- 7.2.7 By tailoring their methods to address the specific risk factors and protective factors identified, the service team can better support couples facing marital crisis and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes in preserving marriages.
- 7.2.8 Moreover, it is well-known that parental conflicts can give rise to transgenerational trauma on children. Therefore, intervention can be carried out to mitigate traumatic experiences of marital conflicts on children.

### *Enhance Service Development*

- 7.2.9 The Project's planned counseling sessions are limited to 4 to 6 sessions due to resource constraints now. The current limitation in resources poses significant challenges in adequately addressing the complex and multifaceted issues encountered by individuals, couples, and families seeking marital counseling services. In view of the high demand for services and the extensive needs of couples and families facing marital difficulties, it is strongly recommended to increase the resources allocated to the project. With additional resources, the counseling sessions can be extended, for example, to 6 to 10 sessions, enhancing the Project's capacity to provide more intensive and tailored support to service users.
- 7.2.10 Moreover, in addition to the challenges faced at the individual and couple levels, longer travel distances can also pose a barrier for parents seeking child counseling services within the Project. To address this issue, it is recommended to establish collaborations with other social service provision units or organizations to offer play therapy services in more accessible locations. By collaborating with these units or organizations, the Project can ensure that children in need of support receive play therapy services conveniently and without the burden of long travel distances. This approach helps overcome geographical constraints and promotes accessibility to essential services for children facing challenges related to their parents' marital difficulties.
- 7.2.11 Collaborating with other service providers also allows for a broader range of expertise and resources to be brought together, enhancing the overall quality of care and support for children. These partnerships can foster an integrated and coordinated approach to addressing the needs of families and ensure that children receive comprehensive support that aligns with their unique circumstances.

- 7.2.12 By offering play therapy services in more accessible locations through collaboration, the Project can effectively break down barriers to access and provide children with the necessary support they require during their parents' marital difficulties. This collaborative effort demonstrates a commitment to meeting the diverse needs of families and ensures the holistic well-being of children within the community.

### *Conduct Professional Capacity Building*

- 7.2.13 In response to the increasing prevalence of divorce in Hong Kong, it is important to provide practitioners with specialised clinical training that addresses the unique challenges and dynamics associated with divorce decision-making counseling. This training equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills to assist couples on the brink of marital crisis, enabling them to make well-informed and sensible choices in handling their marital difficulties. Specifically, the training should emphasize communication and conflict resolution skills, as well as interventions targeting extramarital affairs, as these were identified as major factors leading to divorce ideation in the study's in-depth interviews and Case Information Form. Strengthening these areas in clinical training will better prepare practitioners to effectively support couples navigating these issues.
- 7.2.14 In addition, organising service-sharing sessions in tertiary institutions, social service organisations, and professional bodies can significantly enhance understanding of clients' inner world and struggles. These sessions provide a platform for professionals to share their practice wisdom and intervention frameworks when working with couples on the verge of divorce. By facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting collaboration, professionals can learn from each other's experiences, gain new perspectives, and enhance their overall effectiveness in supporting couples in marital crisis. These service-sharing sessions contribute to the continuous professional development of practitioners and promote a more comprehensive and empathetic approach to working with couples in need.

### *Carry Out Follow-up Study*

- 7.2.15 The implementation of evidence-based practices in service development and enhancement is crucial for utilizing effective and advanced therapeutic approaches and techniques to better serve couples facing marital difficulties. By adopting evidence-based practices, service providers can ensure that their interventions are grounded in research and have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting couples.
- 7.2.16 To assess the long-term effectiveness of the Project on the service users, it is recommended to conduct a follow-up study or a longitudinal study, such as one that extends for six months or one year after the completion of the Project. This follow-up study would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of the positive outcomes achieved through the intervention. It is worth noting that while couples may initially choose to stay in the marriage after receiving couple

therapy, research has shown that a significant percentage (approximately 30% to 60%) may report a deterioration in their relationship after a period of time (Synder & Castellani, 2006). Therefore, conducting a follow-up study becomes even more important to assess the long-term impact of the Project and to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to relationship maintenance or deterioration over time.

- 7.2.17 By conducting a follow-up study, researchers can examine the durability of the intervention effects, identify potential challenges or relapse patterns, and develop strategies to address them. This would further contribute to the ongoing refinement and improvement of the Project, ensuring that it remains effective in supporting couples in the long run.

### *Facilitate Community Education Initiatives*

- 7.2.18 In this Study, proactive help-seeking behaviours is identified as one of the protective factors of preserving marriage. However, influenced by Chinese culture, couples in marital crisis in Hong Kong may not be willing to seek help from outside source on marital problems as they think that “family disgraces” should not be exposed to other parties. In view of this thought, promotion can be stepped up to release the social stigma and ‘normalise’ help-seeking behaviours on marital issues to reduce the influence of traditional concepts. Moreover, different kinds of social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. can be used to promote the Project.
- 7.2.19 Furthermore, HKCMAC can continue to organise workshops, groups and talks and produce videos to promote community education about issues related to marriage and family relationship, such as values of marriage, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, emotional management skills, building of emotional connection between couples, understanding of personality clashes, parenting skills, and impacts of marital conflicts / divorce on children. Also, appropriate strategies can be explored to bring the educational materials to reach a wider audience.

### *Establish Collaboration among Social Service Providers*

- 7.2.20 At the policy level, collaboration among different social service providers can be established for comprehensive support. The expectations and needs of service users may extend beyond the scope of services provided by a single organisation or project, especially for couples on the verge of divorce. Those couples may require additional support services, such as long-term marital counseling involving extramarital affairs, mental health services addressing psychological needs, crisis intervention for emergency situations, etc. To meet these diverse and complex needs, it is recommended to establish a robust collaboration and referral system with other social service providers in the community. This system should facilitate seamless referrals and coordination among various social service providers, including governmental departments, co-parenting

services, and mediation services. Such a collaboration is crucial in providing comprehensive support to individuals and couples facing marital difficulties.

### *Increase Funding for Divorce Decision Counseling Service*

7.2.21 To enhance the availability and quality of divorce decision counseling services, it is essential to allocate increased funding from government and community resources. This financial support will enable service providers to expand their offerings and develop specialised interventions for couples facing marital difficulties.

7.2.22 Moreover, increased funding enables service providers to enhance their infrastructure and resources, such as establishing dedicated counseling centres or helplines, developing informative materials, and conducting outreach campaigns to raise awareness about available support services. This financial support also facilitates the provision of affordable or subsidised counseling options for individuals and couples with limited financial means.

7.2.23 By allocating more financial support for divorce decision counseling services, the government and community can demonstrate their commitment to supporting couples in crisis and promoting healthy relationship outcomes. This investment not only benefits the individuals and families directly involved but also contributes to the overall well-being of the community by fostering stronger, more resilient relationships.

# Annex I In-depth Interview Guideline (Service Users)

## 賽馬會「婚姻・再思」計劃服務使用者 考慮離婚及維繫婚姻的因素之探索性研究 服務使用者訪談指引（深入訪談）

### 訪談問題

#### (a) 背景資料

1. 請問你的年齡、婚姻狀況、子女數目、居住環境、就業情況？
2. 請問你尋找及接受計劃服務的原因是？
3. 請問你對計劃的期望是？

#### (b) 婚姻關係

4. 你與配偶在婚前的關係是怎樣的？
5. 你當時決定結婚的原因？你對婚姻抱持什麼看法？對婚後的生活有什麼期望？
6. 你與配偶在婚後的關係是怎樣的？當中經歷什麼變化？這些變化有何成因及對現時關係有何影響？
7. 你與配偶的婚後生活在哪些方面是如你所期望的？在哪些方面不如你所期望的？

#### (c) 考慮離婚的過程及因素

8. 你 / 配偶何時開始有離婚的想法？是誰先提出離婚？可否描述一下產生離婚想法的原因和經歷？
9. 你和配偶用什麼態度和方法來應對婚姻問題？有沒有就婚姻問題尋求協助？你會如何形容現時與伴侶的關係？
10. 有什麼因素令你對離婚感到掙扎 / 未能確定離婚決定？
11. 你本身對婚姻及離婚有什麼看法和態度？為什麼會有這些看法和態度？

#### (d) 維繫婚姻 / 共親職關係的因素

12. 請你回顧一下自己的婚姻，你認為如果當中能夠增添什麼元素，就能令你的婚姻生活變得更好？
13. (a)（若仍在婚姻中）你認為自己和伴侶現時能夠做些什麼來維繫和改善婚姻關係？  
(b)（若已選擇離異）你認為自己和前配偶能夠做些什麼來維繫共親職關係？

**(e) 對計劃的意見**

14. 請描述一下你參加計劃服務時的過程和感受，例如你參加了計劃中的什麼服務和其中的內容。
15. 計劃服務的內容是否符合你的期望？在哪方面符合或不符合？為什麼？
16. 你在這個計劃服務中得到什麼益處？
17. 在參與計劃服務之後，你認為自己、配偶、與配偶關係有甚麼改變？
18. 你是否滿意計劃服務的安排？
19. 你認為計劃服務有沒有可以改善的地方？如有，是什麼？你對為陷於婚姻危機中的父母提供支援服務有何建議？
20. 其他意見

### 賽馬會「婚姻・再思」計劃服務使用者 考慮離婚及維繫婚姻的因素之探索性研究 個案工作員訪談指引（聚焦小組）

#### 訪談問題

##### **(b) 背景資料**

21. 請問你現時的工作職位及服務年資？
22. 目前提供什麼服務？性質和內容是什麼？

##### **(f) 服務使用者考慮婚姻的因素**

23. 從你的工作經驗所知，服務使用者考慮離婚的常見原因包括什麼？可以分為幾個層面來討論，包括：個人、伴侶、家庭、社會文化等。
24. 從你的工作經驗所知，服務使用者由考慮離婚至決定不離婚和維持現況，甚至選擇修補關係的因素是什麼？

##### **(g) 服務使用者的處境和需要**

25. 從你的工作經驗所知，服務使用者通常在遇到婚姻危機多久後才來尋求協助？原因是什麼？
26. 你認為有什麼因素會影響他們求助的決定？當中有什麼障礙？
27. 你認為有什麼方法可以幫助他們克服上述的障礙？
28. 你認為陷於婚姻危機中的父母通常需要什麼形式的協助？

##### **(h) 對計劃服務的意見**

29. 此服務計劃為服務使用者及其子女帶來什麼正面影響？
30. 此服務計劃對專業同工和社區人士帶來什麼正面影響？
31. 你認為此服務計劃中有什麼元素能夠觸發上述的正面影響？可否舉出一些例子？
32. 你認為此服務計劃有什麼需要改善的地方？
33. 其他意見

# Annex III Case Information Form

香港公教婚姻輔導會  
賽馬會「婚姻·再思」計劃  
個案資料表

1. 個案編號：\_\_\_\_\_

2. 個案開始時間：\_\_\_\_\_ 個案結束時間：\_\_\_\_\_

|             | 服務申請人                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 配偶                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. 性別       | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 男性 (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 女性                                                                                                                                                                            | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 男性 (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 女性                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 4. 年齡 (歲)   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5. 最高教育程度   | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 小學或以下<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 中學<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 文憑或副學士<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 大學或以上                                                                                         | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 小學或以下<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 中學<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 文憑或副學士<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 大學或以上                                                                                         |
| 6. 經濟活動狀況   | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 僱員<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 僱主 / 自僱人士<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 料理家務者<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 待業<br>(5) <input type="checkbox"/> 學生<br>(6) <input type="checkbox"/> 退休                   | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 僱員<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 僱主 / 自僱人士<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 料理家務者<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 待業<br>(5) <input type="checkbox"/> 學生<br>(6) <input type="checkbox"/> 退休                   |
| 7. 個人每月收入   | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 沒有收入<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$10,000 以下<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$10,000 - \$19,999<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$20,000 - \$29,999<br>(5) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$30,000 或以上 | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 沒有收入<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$10,000 以下<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$10,000 - \$19,999<br>(4) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$20,000 - \$29,999<br>(5) <input type="checkbox"/> 港幣\$30,000 或以上 |
| 8. 居港年期     | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 出生至今<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 非在香港出生，居港 7 年或以上<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 居港少於 7 年                                                                                                                | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 出生至今<br>(2) <input type="checkbox"/> 非在香港出生，居港 7 年或以上<br>(3) <input type="checkbox"/> 居港少於 7 年                                                                                                                |
| 9. 有沒有宗教信仰？ | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 有 (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 沒有                                                                                                                                                                             | (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 有 (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 沒有                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                 |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 10. 結婚年齡<br>(歲) |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|

11. 家庭成員人數 (包括申請人): \_\_\_\_\_

12. 服務申請人的居住地區:

- |                                   |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 中西區  | (8) <input type="checkbox"/> 黃大仙區 | (15) <input type="checkbox"/> 大埔區 |
| (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 灣仔區  | (9) <input type="checkbox"/> 觀塘區  | (16) <input type="checkbox"/> 沙田區 |
| (3) <input type="checkbox"/> 東區   | (10) <input type="checkbox"/> 葵青區 | (17) <input type="checkbox"/> 西貢區 |
| (4) <input type="checkbox"/> 南區   | (11) <input type="checkbox"/> 荃灣區 | (18) <input type="checkbox"/> 離島區 |
| (5) <input type="checkbox"/> 深水埗區 | (12) <input type="checkbox"/> 屯門區 |                                   |
| (6) <input type="checkbox"/> 油尖旺區 | (13) <input type="checkbox"/> 元朗區 |                                   |
| (7) <input type="checkbox"/> 九龍城區 | (14) <input type="checkbox"/> 北區  |                                   |

13. 在結婚之前, 服務申請人與配偶的情侶關係維持了幾多年?

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 年或以下  | (4) <input type="checkbox"/> 7 至 9 年 |
| (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 至 3 年 | (5) <input type="checkbox"/> 10 年或以上 |
| (3) <input type="checkbox"/> 4 至 6 年 |                                      |

14. 在結婚之前, 服務申請人與配偶有沒有接受婚前輔導?

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) <input type="checkbox"/> 有 | (2) <input type="checkbox"/> 沒有 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|

15. 服務申請人與配偶有沒有子女?

- (1) ☐ 有, 有 \_\_\_\_\_ 子 \_\_\_\_\_ 女

子女的年齡為:

|   | 第一位     | 第二位     | 第三位     | 第四位     |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 子 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 |
| 女 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 | _____ 歲 |

- (2) ☐ 沒有

16. 在結婚之後, 服務申請人是否現在 / 曾經與自己或配偶家人同住? (子女 / 外傭不作計算) (可同時選 2 及 3)

- (1) ☐ 否, 只與配偶 / 子女 / 家傭同住
- (2) ☐ 是, 現在同住的包括: (可選多項)
- |                                             |                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (a) <input type="checkbox"/> 自己的父母          | (c) <input type="checkbox"/> 配偶的父母   |
| (b) <input type="checkbox"/> 自己的兄弟姊妹        | (d) <input type="checkbox"/> 配偶的兄弟姊妹 |
| (e) <input type="checkbox"/> 其他, 請註明: _____ |                                      |
- (3) ☐ 是, 現在已沒有同住, 但曾經同住的包括: (可選多項)
- |                                             |                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (a) <input type="checkbox"/> 自己的父母          | (c) <input type="checkbox"/> 配偶的父母   |
| (b) <input type="checkbox"/> 自己的兄弟姊妹        | (d) <input type="checkbox"/> 配偶的兄弟姊妹 |
| (e) <input type="checkbox"/> 其他, 請註明: _____ |                                      |

**17. 服務申請人或其配偶的家人有沒有人是曾經離婚？**

(1) ☐ 有，包括：（可選多項）

(a) ☐ 自己的父母

(c) ☐ 配偶的父母

(b) ☐ 自己的兄弟姊妹

(d) ☐ 配偶的兄弟姊妹

(e) ☐ 其他，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

(2) ☐ 沒有

(3) ☐ 不知道

**18. 服務申請人或其配偶的朋友圈子有沒有人是曾經離婚？**

(1) ☐ 有

(2) ☐ 沒有

(3) ☐ 不知道

**19. 服務申請性質：**

(1) ☐ 只有一方申請，一方參與

(2) ☐ 只有一方申請，其後雙方一同參與

(3) ☐ 雙方一同申請，雙方一同參與

**20. 個案考慮離婚的情況是：（可選多項）**

(1) ☐ 只有服務申請人考慮離婚

(2) ☐ 只有服務申請人的配偶考慮離婚

(3) ☐ 雙方均考慮離婚

(4) ☐ 其中一方已決定離婚

(5) ☐ 已分居 / 已開始辦理離婚

**21. 個案轉介來源：**

(1) ☐ 專業人士轉介（如社工、輔導員、老師等）

(2) ☐ 自行求助

**22. 服務申請人考慮離婚原因：（可選多項）**

(1) ☐ 婚外情（丈夫）

(9) ☐ 居住問題（如：長期分隔兩地）

(2) ☐ 婚外情（太太）

(10) ☐ 子女教養 / 親職的差異

(3) ☐ 家暴問題

(11) ☐ 情緒差異

(4) ☐ 言語暴力

(12) ☐ 性困難

(5) ☐ 性格不合

(13) ☐ 經濟困難

(6) ☐ 溝通問題

(14) ☐ 精神健康問題，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

(7) ☐ 價值觀及信念的不同

(15) ☐ 其他重大事件，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

(8) ☐ 姻親衝突

(16) ☐ 其他因素，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

**23. 服務申請人未能落實離婚決定的原因：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 子女因素，如年幼
- (2) ☐ 父母因素，如健康
- (3) ☐ 社會因素，如擔心離婚後被歧視
- (4) ☐ 感情因素，如對配偶仍有感情
- (5) ☐ 經濟因素，如沒有收入
- (6) ☐ 價值觀念因素，如信仰、文化或個人的家庭觀念
- (7) ☐ 婚姻觀
- (8) ☐ 健康因素，如個人 / 配偶 / 子女的身體及精神健康
- (9) ☐ 居住因素，如離婚後沒有居所
- (10) ☐ 暫時未想處理
- (11) ☐ 其他因素，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

**24. 配偶考慮離婚原因：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 婚外情 (丈夫)
- (2) ☐ 婚外情 (太太)
- (3) ☐ 家暴問題
- (4) ☐ 言語暴力
- (5) ☐ 性格不合
- (6) ☐ 溝通問題
- (7) ☐ 價值觀及信念的不同
- (8) ☐ 姻親衝突
- (9) ☐ 居住問題 (如：長期分隔兩地)
- (10) ☐ 子女教養 / 親職的差異
- (11) ☐ 情緒差異
- (12) ☐ 性困難
- (13) ☐ 經濟困難
- (14) ☐ 精神健康問題，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_
- (15) ☐ 其他重大事件，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_
- (16) ☐ 其他因素，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

**25. 配偶未能落實離婚決定的原因：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 子女因素，如年幼
- (2) ☐ 父母因素，如健康
- (3) ☐ 社會因素，如擔心離婚後被歧視
- (4) ☐ 感情因素，如對配偶仍有感情
- (5) ☐ 經濟因素，如沒有收入
- (6) ☐ 價值觀念因素，如在信仰、文化或個人的家庭觀念方面有分歧
- (7) ☐ 婚姻觀
- (8) ☐ 健康因素，如個人 / 配偶 / 子女的身體及精神健康
- (9) ☐ 居住因素，如離婚後沒有居所
- (10) ☐ 暫時未想處理
- (11) ☐ 其他因素，請註明：\_\_\_\_\_

**26. 個案輔導內容包括：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 婚姻回顧
- (2) ☐ 衝突管理
- (3) ☐ 親職指導
- (4) ☐ 個人原生家庭檢視及了解
- (5) ☐ 夫婦相處互動模式
- (6) ☐ 兒童遊戲輔導 / 面談輔導
- (7) ☐ 離合抉擇輔導
- (8) ☐ 情緒輔導

**27. 個案參與的小組及講座服務包括：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 支援小組，包括：\_\_\_\_\_
- (2) ☐ 講座，包括：\_\_\_\_\_
- (3) ☐ 有關法律程序的諮詢或講座
- (4) ☐ 兒童小組，包括：\_\_\_\_\_
- (5) ☐ 親子平衡小組，包括：\_\_\_\_\_

**28. 個案結束時婚姻狀況：(可選多項)**

- (1) ☐ 決定離婚
- (2) ☐ 改善婚姻關係（留在婚姻中）
- (3) ☐ 保持現狀（留在婚姻中）
- (4) ☐ 選擇復合（先前已分居或已辦離婚手續）
- (5) ☐ 轉介至其他服務，包括：（可選多項）
  - (a) ☐ 婚姻輔導
  - (b) ☐ 家事調解
  - (c) ☐ 共親職支援
  - (d) ☐ 個人輔導
  - (e) ☐ 其他：\_\_\_\_\_

# Annex IV Evaluation Form of Counseling Services

## 香港公教婚姻輔導會

### 賽馬會「婚姻·再思」計劃

#### 面談經驗測量表(表一)

姓名：\_\_\_\_\_ 日期：\_\_\_\_\_

甲部：我們很希望了解你對於今次面談的體會，請回答以下問題，多謝合作。

1. 今次面談中，你所覺得的最深刻的領悟 / 學習是：

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2. 你願意做些什麼去面對和解決目前的困難？

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3. 你希望下次面談時輔導員能協助你處理以下的事情：

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|                           | 十分<br>不同<br>意 |   |   |   | 十分<br>同<br>意 |     |
|---------------------------|---------------|---|---|---|--------------|-----|
| 4. 我曾經容許自己有多些時間考慮離婚決定。    | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 5. 做離婚決定前，我願意透過不同的方向擴闊思考。 | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 6. 我願意嘗試給婚姻多個機會。          | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 7. 思考離婚時，我會考慮對孩子的影響。      | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 8. 我對我和配偶的溝通模式有初步了解。      | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 9. 我認識到如何減少跟配偶的衝突。        | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 10. 我明白父母離異對孩子發展及情緒健康的影響。 | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 11. 整體來說，面談對你是有幫助的。       | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |
| 12. 整體來說，你對面談感到滿意。        | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            | 不適用 |

乙部：(個案結束時填寫) 其他意見 / 建議：

1. 你對輔導服務或輔導員的意見 / 建議有 (包括值得欣賞及需要改善的地方)：

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## Annex V Evaluation Form of Activities

### 香港公教婚姻輔導會

#### <心心相印愛孩子>親子關係小組(家長) 評估問卷

姓名：\_\_\_\_\_ 日期：\_\_\_\_\_

我們很希望了解你對於今次活動的評價，請回答以下問題，多謝合作。

##### 甲、整體評價

|                       | 非常不同意<br>(1)             | 不同意<br>(2)               | 一般<br>(3)                | 同意<br>(4)                | 非常同意<br>(5)              |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 整體而言，我滿意是次小組。      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. 整體而言，此小組對我有幫助。     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. 整體而言，我能夠學到知識 / 技巧。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

##### 乙、小組過程有助我：

|                        | 非常不同意<br>(1)             | 不同意<br>(2)               | 一般<br>(3)                | 同意<br>(4)                | 非常同意<br>(5)              |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 明白情感依附對孩子及自己的影響     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. 學習與孩子的正向溝通及親密關係的要素  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. 學會多些親子相處技巧，增強健康親子關係 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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