

Abstract #: 1399**Associations of family wellbeing with face-to-face and instant messaging family communication amidst the COVID-19 pandemic**

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Background: Face-to-face communication has reduced amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. We examined the associations between family communication and family wellbeing.

Methods: In an online survey of the Hong Kong Jockey Club SMART Family-Link Project in May 2021, 4981 Hong Kong Chinese adults (mean age 43.5 years, response rate 24.3%) reported family communication methods of face-to-face and instant messaging (IM) when the COVID-19 pandemic was severe (yes/no), communication contents that were neutral, positive, supportive, and negative (yes/no), and communication quality (0-10). The associations of family wellbeing (health, happiness, and harmony, 0-10) with communication methods and contents were examined using linear regression (β), adjusting for each other, sex, age, socioeconomic status, and number of cohabitants. The mediating effects of communication quality on these associations were examined. Prevalence estimates were weighted by sex, age and education of general population.

Results: 7.1% respondents reported no communication, 12.7% face-to-face only, 26.7% IM only, and 53.4% both. More communication contents were neutral (range 83.1-99.3%) than positive (42.1-62.2%), supportive (37.5-54.8%), and negative (10.9-34.5%). Communication quality was highest in using both methods (6.7 vs 4.5-6.6, all $P \leq 0.02$). Better family wellbeing was associated with using IM only (adjusted β : 0.37) and both methods (0.37) than face-to-face only and with positive (0.62) and supportive (0.45) contents (all $P \leq 0.001$). Communication quality mediated 35.2-93.5% of these associations.

Conclusions: Better family wellbeing was associated with IM and face-to-face communication and their contents, partly through communication quality.

Key messages: Family IM communication with positive and supportive contents may enhance family wellbeing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.