The promotion of positive communication and social interaction between parents & children within the IBCV community

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Abstract

The researcher of this project is a volunteer worker at the International Buddhist College of Victoria. Anecdotal evidence has put forwarded prior to this research that communication and relationships between parents and children in IBCV were deteriorating as a result of parents working long hours and children spending too much time playing computer games.

This research has used the Proactive Action Research model and follows Schmuck’s (1997) description of cycles which perform an action up front for the collection of data and has proposed a Tea Ceremony activity to provide a means to open up the study. This activity has also provided the opportunity for parents and children to interact and socialize within their community.

The Proactive Action research model was found to be a useful methodology and suitable for this project. Through the cycles and the feedback of participants have helped to determine and incorporate the findings of this research.

The results have brought a change in attitude and action processes among the organization’s management and has strengthened their awareness of parents and students within the community. The perception about parents long working hours and computer game playing of young people have been addressed and confirmed and the research has positively benefited both the organization and the school community.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of Research

In early 2003, three seemingly complementary concerns had been identified anecdotally by staff at the Fo Guang Chinese School of the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV) where the researcher works as a volunteer. The first concern was that many parents are required to work long hours in their jobs. The second was that many young people are turning to play computer games for a large number of hours per week. The third concern was that parents and young people were independently reporting to IBCV staff that the communication and relationships within families (between parents and young people) were appearing to deteriorate.

In this study the researcher aims to consider the above perceptions. If they are confirmed then as a result of the project activities will be identified that IBCV could conduct to facilitate and improve intra-family communications and to assist with relationship building.

In January 2003, the Officer in Charge of the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV) in Melbourne – Reverend Jue Kai, granted permission for a research study to be undertaken (appendix 1).
The study proposed to initiate a Tea Ceremony for families attending the Fo Guang Chinese School within IBCV to participate in as one of the activities. Following Schmuck’s (1997) description of cycles that perform an action up front for the collection of data, this study will use a Proactive Action Research model. Initiating an activity and collecting data by observing and recording the patterns of communication stands as an example of proactive action research (Schmuck 1997).

Under such a strategy, the Tea Ceremony activity becomes one activity amongst a number of possibilities, which provided a means to open up the study. The participants in the research are the young people studying at the Fo Guang Chinese School of International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV) and their parents. During the activity, the participants were required to follow the rules of this cultural tradition and demonstrate respect and tolerance toward each other, which is considered an essential element for peace and harmony.

1.2 Overview of literature review

The literature review has guided the researcher in understanding and appreciating previous research studies in similar areas and has provided direction in the development and application of the study through the range of ideas and arguments presented. In order to investigate the communication and interaction between parents and their children, a review of the literature is important because it enables the researcher to understand the key issues that have already been identified around this topic. The literature review
allows the reflection of problems through other people’s eyes and provided support for this study.

Literature such as research reports, books, and journal articles have been selected for consideration. The areas including Australia’s working time crisis, working hours and work intensification, the balance of work and family, the impact of long working hours on family and community life, parent and children relationships, children and family, family communications, effects of computer games to children, stress and pressures that cause problems for teenagers and community support for families.

From the literature review, the following common themes emerged:

- Parent and child communication is an important function for the family.
- Long work hours have an impact on health and family life.
- Long work hours raise stress and illness in a worker’s life.
- Social support can be a strategy for coping with stress.
- More young people are becoming ‘addicted’ to computer games

With the above themes as background for the research, the exegesis will focus on the research aim, namely to promote positive communication and interaction between parents and young people among families at the IBCV in order to foster harmonious relationships.
1.3 Introduction to the International Buddhist College of Victoria

The International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV) was established in Yarraville, Victoria in 1992 as a branch temple of Foguangshan, a Buddhist monastery in Taiwan, which is an internationally recognized Buddhist organization with more than 130 branch temples around the world. Master Hsing Yun is the founder of Foguangshan and the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV). The name Foguangshan means Buddha’s Light Mountain.

Master Hsing Yun became a monk when he was twelve years of age. He has propagated Buddhist teachings for 50 years and is now based in Taiwan. His monastic vow to benefit all sentient beings (that is, all creatures) has subsequently led him to build temples on five continents, including His Lai Temple in Los Angeles and Nan Tien Temple in Wollongong, New South Wales.

IBCV was built with ancient Chinese features, consisting of a Buddha hall, meditation hall, an auditorium and dormitories for resident monks and nuns. In order to meet the needs of multiple functions, the college also has a conference hall, multi-purpose meeting rooms and offices, a library with books from a range of cultures and countries.

The college provides multi-functional and multi-lingual (English, Chinese and Vietnamese) services. It is not only a site for Buddhist activities, but it is also open to the public for a variety of social and educational functions conducive to the spiritual, social
and physical well-being of Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The IBCV is a cultural, educational and religious centre. Figure 1 presents the structure of the organization:

![IBCV Structure Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: IBCV structure**
1.4 The philosophy of the International Buddhist College Victoria

The philosophy of IBCV is “the whole world is our home and all people are one”. The guiding principles of IBCV are to cultivate broad-minded characters capable of embracing all the cultures and societies in the world, and when helping others, they should make no distinction between people as to their race, age, gender, nationality or wealth (Hsing 1997, p.6). IBCV members* work hard to have good lives and happy families and hope to influence others in a positive way and to interact in harmony with each other. They believe that families do not only produce and raise new lives – they are fundamental to the growth of the individual and the stability of the nation (Hsing 1997).

The underlying philosophy of IBCV is the four verses of commitment in humanistic Buddhism and morality. The four verses are: Offer others faith, Offer others joy, Offer others hope, Offer others convenience (Hsing 1997). These provide the guiding principles of the organization.

1.5 About the Fo Guang Chinese School

Fo Guang Chinese School is one of the Saturday language schools of IBCV. The school was established in 1995. These schools offers seven classes from early childhood to primary and secondary school levels, VCE and adult classes, and has 15 staff.

* People joining the college will become members, they work together and willing by take on some tasks required making their organization’s events precede.
The objectives of the school are to:

- pursue the vision of the founder – Master Hsing Yun in fostering talent through education;
- instruct students in the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing of the Chinese language;
- assist students in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of character;
- promote Chinese culture, ethics and morality. (Information Sheet of Fo Kuang Chinese School 2003)

The attributes of the school are to:

- Encourage and inspire techniques for fostering students’ interest in the Chinese language.
- Provide an excellent learning environment with video and audio teaching facilities.
- Provide two literal Chinese language systems – traditional and simplified forms according to Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF).
- Offer stories from the resident Buddhist Masters teaching ethical and moral principles. (Fo Kuang Chinese School Information for 2003 Prospective Students)

The school times are 9:15a.m. to 12:15p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. every Saturday.

The school is located at 8 Somerville Rd., Yarraville, Victoria 3013.
1.6 Rationale for the study

This study is important because it looks at the improvement and promotion of positive communication and interaction between adults and young people at the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV). As the world has changed rapidly over recent years, there has been a decline in the global economy, with rising unemployment, political instability, natural disasters, wars, diseases and terrorist attacks which have caused suffering and sadness. Due to the uncertainty of the future and job security, people have found the need to place their desire and needs before others. Traditional moral concepts such as respect and tolerance, generosity and caring for others are deteriorating and fading from people’s memory.

Some people need to work extremely hard to earn a living to support their family and often find it difficult to make time for their family and friends. Accordingly some people’s lives may have become tense and stressful. Affection between family members has in some cases become detached and the atmosphere in the families has deteriorated.

According to Dunn (1988) the family is an institution wherein children can learn to acquire social strategies, to solve problems, to express emotions and to perceive and evaluate others as well as the relationships between them. The daily encounter with others in the family (parents, siblings or grandparents) constitutes the basis of the child’s
impression of how families interact, which creates recurring patterns of social behaviour and modes of communication.

The relationship of parents and children is a potent determinant of a child’s social, emotional and cognitive development. To teach young people to respect others, such as their teachers, parents and friends, they need to have a good relationship with each other. When young people learn culturally appropriate manners, they will have the basis to function in society and get along with others.

1.7 Research Topic and assumptions

This study proposed to research the communication, interaction and impact on relationships within a selected group of families. The focus of the research is on the promotion of positive communication and social interaction between parents and children within the IBCV community. For the purpose of this study children within the families are included within the category of young people. As the family is an institution where young people can learn to acquire social strategies, to solve problems, to express emotions, to perceive and evaluate others as well as the relationships between them. Without the bonding and attachment with their parents, children develop little of the confidence they will need to be successful in future relationships and ventures.

The major assumption is that if the parents and young people in their family have a good relationship, the atmosphere in the family will be healthy and harmonious. The secure
attachment is associated with young people’s abilities to explore, to develop social skills, to display fewer problems outside the home, and to achieve academic success. Good communication within the family may strengthen the relationship and make it easier to cope when stressful situations occur. Hence the way that a parent’s communication affects young people is very important to understand.

1.8 Aim

The aim of this project is to investigate a positive way of communication and interaction between parents and young people within the family in order to foster harmonious relationships. It is anticipated that the outcome of the research will be the identification of activities for parents and young people to participate in together. Such activities could be used to open cross-generational communication between parents and young people and simultaneously build stronger and improved relationships. This would potentially alleviate or assist parents in managing stress associated with long hours of work or isolation from their children when they are home alone. In chapter 2, the selected literature includes the communication in the family and parent/child relationships, issues of long working hours, the impact to workers’ health and supports for families to cope with stress and issues of computer games and young people.

1.9 Chapter overview

Chapter 2 is literature reviews which include communication in the family and family relationship, the issue about long working hours and the impacts to parents and children
are also discussed. Chapter 3 is the methodology and design, which includes the introduction of Tea Ceremony and its customs and the implementation of this activity. The data collection techniques and the ethical considerations are also being covered. Chapter 4 is the Method and data analysis, which will include the data collection procedures, discussion of interview data, correlation, and the changes that the study has brought about. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion of the study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to gain an understanding about parent/child communication, family relationships, long working hours, and the impact on health, the issues of computer games affecting young people, selected literature reviews in these areas were conducted. Publications from both Australia and overseas were selected for this review, research studies in journal articles, relevant World Wide Web (www) site documentation were included as references. This literature review is selective and focused particularly on the practitioner.

2.1 Communication in the family

Hofer, Youniss and Noack (1998) stated that the daily encounters with others in the family, constitutes the basis for the child’s first impression of how families interact which created recurring patterns of social behaviour and modes of communication. These experiences can be taken as a basic framework for the child’s expanding concepts of social relationships, the belief in the possibility that he or she can affect things and persons, along with a growing sense of self, this framework is established in ways parents communicate with children and with each other. Children’s behaviours and the likelihood to follow different pathways in their own development appear to be influenced by the parent’s attachment quality, the parents’ abilities to cope with stressful situations and to maintain the stability of family climate (Hofer, Youniss & Noack, 1998, p. 83).
According to Bilchik (2003) the way that parents interact with their children influence the type of people that they become. Parents’ actions influence the way children feel about themselves. When parents respect their children, the children learn to respect themselves; when parents show affection, children learn how to share their feelings with others. Bilchik suggested that effective parent-child communication is the foundation for building a child’s self-esteem and fosters loving, supportive relationships.

Baumrind (1971) comments that young people from families with open communication are seen as more emotionally or socially mature. Barnes and Olson (1977, p. 372) also commented that open communication may be important for the functioning of the family as a unit. This is in contrast to Lewis, Beavers, Gusset and Phillips (1976, p. 48) who found that “healthy” and “well-functioning” families respect individual family members, and are able to express thoughts and feelings. Reiss (1980) stated that “the universal essence of the family is a small kinship-structured group with the key function of nurturing socialization” (p. 29).

2.2 Family (parent/child) relationships

In this section the focus is on the parent and child relationship within the family. De Vito (1998, p. 316) stated that ‘relationship deterioration’ refers to the weakening of the bonds that hold people together. If the attachment relationship is supportive, stable and affectionate, then development is most likely to proceed along a normal path.
Furthermore, Garmesy and Rutter (1983) considered that it is important for people having opportunities to interact with each other as social beings.

Galvin and Brommel (2000) stated that “a healthy family recognizes the interdependence of all members of the family system and attempts to provide for growth of the system as a whole, as well as the individual members involved. Such families develop a capacity for adaptation and cohesion that avoids the extremes of the continuum; it welcomes each life stage, tries to find some joy in the present, and creates a personal network to provide support during crises. Such families exhibit levels of cohesion, which allow members to feel cared for but not smothered. Family members make an effort to understand the underlying meanings of messages expressed by other members. All members find a sense of connections in the family’s stories and rituals and their lives reflect their cultural heritages” (p.387).

Banks (2003) reported that “a finding based on analysis of data collected from National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in 1977 which involved almost 9,000 students indicated Adolescents aged 12 to 14 living with families heavily involved in religious activities are more likely to have strong relationships with their parents and participate in family activities and less likely to run away from home. They are more likely to admire their parents than their peers from non-religious families; they eat dinner with the folks and to have parents involved in their social lives” (Banks, 2003, p.B8).
In 2001, a four-year project based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill entitled “National Study of Youth and Religion” conducted research about the role of religion and spiritually in the lives of American adolescents. The executive summary of the report stated that all three dimensions of family and parental religious involvement analyzed (family religious activity, parental religious service attendance and parental prayer) tend to be associated significantly with positive family relationship characteristics (Cessato, 2003, p. A02).

Cessato (2003) has also reported that Christian Smith (a sociology professor at Chapel Hill) said, “There is a consistent association across a variety of measures that more religiously active family with early adolescents in the household exhibit signs of stronger family relationships”. Smith also said that “The parents get along with the teens better, the teens more likely look up to their parents and the families do positive activities together” (Cessato 2003, p. A02).

Lewis (2001) has interviewed parents and children from 47 families in Melbourne, he finds “that it is important to children that parents share significant moments in their lives whether the children are primary or secondary school age. While children value the incomes that their parents earned, some talk about lack of time spent with their parents as a negative consequence of their parents working and nearly all the children referred to the impact of work, on parents’ time spent with children” (p.11).
2.3 Issues about long working hours

The literature presents several issues that workers encounter when working long hours. The ideas presented in this section primarily focus on some negative impacts on health and family life. An overview of these issues is presented in this section.

In discussing a survey conducted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Murphy (2002) reported on a significant impact which related to the worker’s health was that workers are tense at work. Similarly, the results from a survey of health and safety representatives conducted by the ACTU suggested that stress is among the five top-ranked workplace injuries. In addition, Murphy reported that many other physical and psychological injuries are often caused or directly related to stress. Workplace stress has been blamed as a factor leading to slowdowns within organizations that has made the working life much harder. In some workplaces, employees have had to work harder and/or longer hours to make up for retrenched colleagues. Fewer workers are doing more intensified work across workplaces (Murphy 2002).

Petrulis (1999) reported on a research study undertaken by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT) that the change in the industrial relations system, downsizing of companies and the broader global economic downturns are factors affected the rapid change in labour markets and of working conditions within workplaces. In addition, further changes in office technology have, in many cases, fostered extreme job insecurity. High unemployment has weakened the bargaining power
of the workforce and made participation in the labour market much more competitive. People are fearful of losing their job and have to work longer hours to catch up on their earnings.

Webber and Campbell (1996, pp. 3-4) emphasized that because of changes in the workplace, the structure of daily life has been overturned and commitments which had been based around working life have had to be totally re-organized. Social isolation has become more acute as personal interactions and involvement in leisure activities has declined.

Priest (2003) reported that another survey by the ACTU shows that the average union member is stressed, insecure about their job, going backwards financially and more likely to say that their work is having a negative rather than a positive impact on their personal life. In the ACTU test case in 2002 on the issue of working hours, evidence was presented that 55 percent of respondents believed that the impact of work on personal life had increased in the last few years and 38 percent believe that work has a negative impact on family.

In the ACTU (2000) study, Mr. Bill Mansfield, the Assistant Secretary of the ACTU reported that the numbers of workers suffering from symptoms of stress at work were sharply increasing. Further, he stated that workplace stress costs Australia up to 1.2 billion dollars per year. In the 1997 National Health and Safety Campaign conducted by the ACTU, it was reported that the respondents to their surveys indicated that:
• 38% reported long hours
• 25% reported insufficient rest breaks
• 25% reported increased workloads as the most stressful factor at work

In terms of the effect that long hours are having, over half of the respondents reported that their health is being affected by the length of the working week:

• 76% reported stress
• 55% reported headaches
• 51% reported depression
• 25% reported that excessive hours are adding to risk of accidents

(ACTU 2000)

ACTU Assistant Secretary Richard Marles (2003) argues that “Australia is the country with the second largest working hours in the OECD… long hours of work have also been linked to a decrease in parenting, the amount of time that parents spend with their children; and an increase in problems suffered by adolescent children”.

2.4 Facts on the impact of long hour work to parents and children

Peacock (2001) reported that the proportion of full-time workers working standard working hours (i.e., about 40 hours a week) has dropped significantly since the late 1970s, whereas the proportion working very long hours has increased. Richard Marles, Assistant
Secretary of the ACTU told the Working Hours Summit that 31% of our full time workforce now works in excess of 48 hours a week, and millions of Australians work an average in excess of 50 hours a week (Marles, 2002). The ACTU survey of 8,000 union members reported that more than a third indicated that they are unhappy with their long working hours. It is also true to say that long hours now has extended to every occupational group in the workforce and to every industry within this country, in accordance to the result of the survey it will be a big issue and work intensification (ACTU 2003).

Galinsky (1999) stated that many children find that their fathers have more difficulty focusing on them than their mother because they are more likely to be working longer hours. Parents are more likely to be rushed, to be time pressured and to be focused less attention to their children as they are more likely to be stressed and tired due to long hours of work (1999, p. 313.). Lewis (2001, p. 14) stated that time is one of the critical factors that influence the quality of family life. Most of the children wished that their parents spent more time with them (2001, p. 7). Lewis found that “while children valued the incomes that their parents earned, some talked about lack of time spent with their parents as a negative consequence of their work and nearly all the children referred to the impact of work on parent’s time spent with them” (2001 p.11.)

John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, told parents that “For children to get the best from childhood, parents need to listen to what their child wants. If parents can develop an ability to really hear what their child is saying to them without
overreacting, criticizing or immediately offering solutions, parents and children will reap the rewards over time” (Lonergan, 2004).

Lonergan acknowledged that sacrificing time is at the heart of effective parenting. Parents are often heard to complain about the pressure they are under to fulfill a child’s material desires, however, children will always appreciate a parent’s time more than a chunk of their wages (Lonergan, 2004, p. 10).

Marles (2002) stated that long working hours have been associated with a decrease of quantities of “hang around” time but also in terms of more concentrated periods of quality time with their children. It is well documented that a lack of time spent between parents and their children gives rise to behavioural problems particularly in adolescence. According to Peacock (2001), the key thing that children need from parents is time, both “hang around time” and “focused time”. The work-life balance is fundamentally important for parents but it is also important for children to have time with their parents. Dr. Gordon Harold, of Cardiff University suggested that “Spending time together as a family promotes cohesion within the family unit and a strong cohesive relationship is beneficial to children and parents” (Western Mail, 2003).

### 2.5 Work stress and illness

Brody (1989) emphasizes that research consistently indicates that as stress increases the likelihood of illness increases. People encounter many sources of stress throughout their
lives, yet work-related stress is becoming much more common with both depression and health complaints on the increase. These effects have been demonstrated among autoworkers, medical residents working in emergency rooms, hospital staff, social workers, psychiatric healthcare staff, railroad workers, kitchen staff and steel mill workers.

According to Hendrix, Steel, and Schultz (1987), college students will similarly encounter their own array of stress-inducing events, such as low grades, relationship breakdowns between parents that often end in separation and divorce. Again, the greater the stress a person experiences, the more likelihood that physical illness will occur. Weiner, Hiner, and Tierney (1987) believed that driving an automobile in heavy traffic on a regular basis could significantly increase the probability of catching a cold or developing influenza. Seta, Seta and Wang (1991) agreed that with several negative events occurring in the same general time period, they have a cumulative effect, as the total number of stressful experiences increases, the probability of illness also increases.

### 2.6 Support for families to cope with stress

Marian (1992) argued that balancing family and career responsibilities is a great challenge to career couples. Lack of balance can result in role overload and general marital dissatisfaction. A family will be stressed with an imbalance of work and family life. When the balance is disturbed, the family changes its way of functioning to reestablish homeostasis (p. 47).
According to Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce (1994), social support is a common and effective strategy for coping with stress. This involves physical and psychological comfort provided by friends and family. People who interact closely with others are generally more able to avoid illness than those who remain isolated from interpersonal contact. Shinn et al., (1993) stated that when illness does occur, people who receive social support recover more quickly than those who do not. The negative effects of stress in a work setting can be lessened if the employee received support from co-workers and from the organization itself. Clark (1993) acknowledged that one of the reasons for the positive effects of interpersonal support is that talking to someone else (especially about ways to solve one’s problems) reduces stress and the incidence of both major and minor health problems.

2.7 Issues of computer games and young people

The issue of computer games and their impact on young people is also considered to be important in this study. The information presented in this section primarily focuses on how computer games affecting the socializing and health of young people when they spent large numbers of hours playing computer games. Problems identified by psychologists and doctors, the pro and cons of computer playing are also discussed in this section.
2.7.1 Computer addiction – a new problem identified by psychologists and doctors

Moy (2003) reported that pressures put teenagers on a ‘dangerous slide’ that cause problems of addiction to computer games. She also reported that Professor Lee Sing, from the Chinese University in Hong Kong, said a pattern was emerging from surveys showing more young people complaining of stress. More young people become victims to cope with the increased stress of modern living. Mr. Ho Wing Cheong, a supervisor from the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups said that many young people complained they were suffering stress as a result of financial problems and disputes within their families. They have an understanding of the financial troubles suffered by their parents, who may be out of work or closing down their business could create much anxiety in young people (p. 4).

According to Professor Lee Sing, addiction to computer games is becoming common amongst young people with poor academic records and poor social and family relationships. Youngsters resort to playing computer games in order to ease their frustration. It was reported that young people can easily fall into playing computer games, as it is very easy to access them at places such as Internet cafes and electronic game centres alike. Professor Lee also said that parents and teachers might not be able to detect the addiction easily.
Moy (2003, p. 4) stated that young people can become more reluctant to share their problems and frustrations with others and instead begin to spend most of their time playing computer games. Retreating to this substitute behaviour means that their problems are never resolved. Mr. Robin Cheng Man-Biu, the Principal of Tsung Tsin College in Hong Kong, said that young people were old enough to understand the financial pressure faced by their families. In addition, they are worried about their own future after seeing the hardship faced by their parents.

### 2.7.2 Issues of computer games

According to Michael and Wang (2003), a research study by the Christian Young Welfare Group in Hong Kong revealed that more than one in seven young people are ‘addicted’ to the Internet, with hundreds of thousands logging on to play online games. Michael and Wang reported that psychologist Dr. Andrew Tang Cheuck-Wing said that people with “cyber-addictive tendencies” tended to spend more than four hours a day on the Internet. Such addicts, however, sometimes played online games for up to 12 hours a day. The poll followed a widespread concern following the recent deaths of at least three young cyber-addicts whose deaths were suspected of being related to computer games. Michael and Wang (2003) also reported that a game enthusiast, Ng Man Fai, 28, collapsed and died in a cyber-café after playing the popular action game *Diablo II*. 
Another report by Michael and Wang (2003) stated that Dr. Tang and fellow researcher Tiger Chan Chi-fu said they have found that excessive playing on a computer can damage both physical and mental health. This sort of Internet addiction means that these young people tended to neglect personal needs. This can lead to poor emotional control, lower concentration, and a breakdown in family relationships. Both researchers conceded that addiction to online computer games was an issue of serious social concern (Michael & Wang, 2003, p.6).

According to EuropeMedia (2002) Gavin Clearly of Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital in London said “computer games with vibrating handheld control devices should carry health warnings because they can cause damage to hands. Parents and children should be aware of potential health problems that could be caused by prolonged use of the devices”. Cleary called for the health warning after a 15 year-old boy developed symptoms similar to hand-arm vibration syndrome, which is usually developed from using industrial tools for a long period of time. A boy who played computer games with a vibrating control device for up to seven hours a day suffered pain and swelling in his hands (EuropeMedia 2002).

### 2.7.3 The pros and cons of computer game playing

Although some people are worried about the health and socializing issues caused by computer games, researcher Chan Chi Fu rejected the fears of the virtual reality world.
He disputed that these activities tended to isolate the young and said that “the relationship with the Web does not substitute their contact with friends; on the contrary it strengthens” (Michael & Wang, 2003). McLean (2001, p.10) reported that another psychologist Professor Kevin Durkin said “computer games are popular with young people, but game playing tends not to displace traditional recreations, and they do not impair social lives”.

Overall, the evidence from the issues in working hours has affecting family relationship and health of workers. Parents’ longs working hours have been linked to stress and fatigue. The lacks of contact time and communication will affect parent/children relationships. When children do not have a good relationship with their family, they will become stressed and reluctant to share their problems and they will resort to play computer games to ease their pressure and frustration.

2.8 Summary of literature review

Evidence from different areas of the literature has shown that effective parent/child communication will foster supportive relationships. Families with strong relationships exhibit cohesion. Research reported that long working hours would affect workers’ family and health. When healthy and well functioning family interacts closely with each other will generally able to avoid illness and negative effects such as stress can be lessened.
Furthermore, computer games are becoming more common and easy to access. Young people were old enough to understand the pressure from parents, when they have problem they become reluctant to share with others and instead to spend most of their time playing computer games to ease their frustration. Overall, the long working hours affecting workers’ health and their family life and parents working long hours will become stressed and tired will also affected their children and young people.

Chapter 3 is the methodology and design, which will include the introduction of Tea Ceremony and its custom, implementation of Tea Ceremony activity. Data collection techniques and the ethical considerations will also be covered.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter discusses various aspects relating to the research methodology and design applied within the project. Firstly, a description of the research methodology with details of the project participants and their involvement in the research is also presented. Discussion of the data collection techniques, the Tea Ceremony activity, the interview sessions, and the methods used to assess the information collected are also included in this chapter.

3.1 Research Methodology

Action Research is selected as the methodology for this project. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) defined that Action Research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations to improve the rationality and justice of their practices as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p. 5). Likewise, Greenwood and Levin (1988) state that “the purpose of action research is always and explicitly, to improve practice” (p. 50).

Grundy and Kemmis (1988) commented on educational action-research as a family of activities in curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, systems planning and policy development. These activities share commonality through the identification of strategies for planned action. These are implemented, and then systematically submitted to observation, analysis
and reflection. Participants in the action being considered are integrally involved in all of these activities (p.322).

Schmuck (1997) suggested that action research offers a means of changing from current practice toward better practice. Action research is planned inquiry – a deliberate, search for truth, information or knowledge, it also consists of planned continuous and systematic procedures for reflecting on professional practice and for trying out alternative practices to improve outcomes. It unfolds through a spiral of cycles: reflecting, planning, acting, data collecting, analyzing, replanning, acting, data collecting and reflecting (pp. 28-29). The following diagram is Schmuck’s steps of the proactive action research cycle:

![Schmuck's Proactive Action Research cycle](image)

Fig. 2 Schumuck’s Proactive Action Research cycle.
As the Action Research process involves a continuous cycle of planning, action (involving data collection and analysis) and reflection of action, it was identified as a particularly useful approach for the present research. It is because applying a cyclical research approach, rather than a ‘linear model’, is beneficial in ultimately developing a practical framework for the planning of activities for IBCV. After the implementation of the planned activities, it was necessary to collect data regularly and keep track of the participants’ reactions and feedback. To analyze and reflect on the meaning of the data then try another practice in order to achieve the aims of the research. The important feature of this action research will go through several cycles (or spirals) of the basic phases of the study. The cycle of review, evaluate and action will continue in order to improve the practice and the task will not finished when the project ends. The outcome for the most welcome family activities nominated by the participants will be suggested to the organization for implementation and will also used as new practice in future research.

According to McNiff (1988), “action research … implies change in people’s lives and therefore in the system in which they live” (p.3). Griffiths (1988) declared that “the purpose of action research is, always and explicitly to improve practice” (p.21). When considering this project in the context of the types of Action Research described by Kemmis (2001) it would be classified as “practical”. This is because the project aims at changing a particular practice to achieve a successful outcome, which is to promote positive communication and social interaction between parents and young people within the organization.
Schmuck (1997) defined that in proactive action research, action precedes data collection and analysis. The educator acts and then studies effects of the action (p. 31). This study will use the proactive action research model. In being proactive, the researcher will be inspired to try a new practice. The inspiration might arise from reflection of past experience, debriefing from the organization or the school community which includes teachers, students and parents. The inspirations are three complementary concerns in the school community within the organization. Those concerns have been stated in Chapter 1.

The steps for the proactive action research will start from:

- Step 1. planning—a new practice/activity (Tea Ceremony activity).
- Step 2. implementing the activity
- Step 3. collecting data (by a questionnaire and interviews) and analyzing data (check what the data means).
- Step 4. reflection (reflect on alternative ways for improvement) and implement another new practice.
The Sequence will travel the full circle back to step 1 and the processes will continue in order to make the practice more effective.

Figure 3: Proactive Action Research cycle (Researcher’s interpretation)

3.2 Participants

The key participants in the project were the Reverends (nuns) in the International Buddhist College of Victoria (IBCV), teachers, parents and students from the IBCV Fu
Guang Chinese School. The participation in the Tea Ceremony and survey was anonymous and voluntary and all participants showed enthusiasm throughout the duration of the project. For example, this included participating in the tea ceremony, in the survey, attending interviews and provided suggestions of change. The writer of this project was the principal researcher, through collecting information, interpretation and documentation, participation and observation in the Tea Ceremony activity. The researcher is also involved in the setting up of the event, preparation of leaflets and handouts and participating in the activity. The IBCV sponsored bottled water, tea sets for the participants, and provided permission to use their Activity Hall.

3.3 Introduction of Tea and Tea Ceremony

The Legendary Origins of Tea

The story of tea began in ancient China over 5,000 years ago. According to legend, tea was discovered in 2737 BC by the Chinese emperor Shen Nong. When some tea leaves accidentally blew into a pot of boiling water, and a brown liquid was infused into the water. The Emperor was interested in the new liquid, he drank some and found it very refreshing and according to the legend, tea was created. This myth maintains such a practical narrative, that many mythologists believe it may relate closely to the actual events now lost in ancient history (Stash 2003).
The Chinese Art of Tea Drinking

During the mid-Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), a man named Lu Yu entered a Buddhist monastery early in life, but he returned to secular life when he was older. He was later best known for summarizing the knowledge and experience of his predecessors and contemporaries into the first compendium in the world on tea – the *Tea Classic*. This work helped to popularize the art of tea drinking all across China, making avid tea drinkers of everyone from the emperor and ministers to the street hawker and soldier. Even the neighboring countries of Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia came to adopt the tea drinking custom (The Traditional Chinese Culture in Taiwan: Tea 2004).

Chinese Tea Custom

In a traditional Chinese marriage ceremony, the bride and groom kneel in front of their parents and serve them tea which is a gesture of gratefulness. It is like saying “thanks for bringing us up, now that we are getting married, we owe it all to you.”

In old days, within Chinese organizations and families, people of lower rank serve tea to the higher ranked people. Younger generation greet older generation in a way to show their respect. For any serious apology, when words are not enough, “pour tea and apologize” is an act of regretfulness and submissiveness (Chinese Teas 2004).
**Tea Ceremony in China and Japan**

Tea was elevated to an art form resulting in the creation of the Chinese and Japanese Tea Ceremony. The form that still remains nowadays was originally from Chinese monasteries. It has its roots in Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. This form was learned by the Japanese priest Yeisei, who had spent many years in a Chinese monastery, where he learned and saw the value of tea in China in enhancing religious mediation.

Before 1500, the Japanese tea ceremony had adopted the Chinese tea custom in the monastery and developed to a tea religion as Cha Dao with concepts and formation of peace, respect, clearness and silence and this unique custom was immediately accepted by the Japanese. The Tea Ceremony required years of training and practice to graduate in the art. The best description of this complex art form is an act performed in the most perfect, most polite, most graceful and most charming manner as possible (Tea Ceremony 2004).

### 3.4 Implementation of a Tea Ceremony: A proactive action research event

The study proposed to initiate a Tea Ceremony activity for participants. This activity is less complex as compared with a traditional Tea Ceremony. The participants in the research are the young people studying at the Fo Guang Chinese School of IBCV and
their parents. Under such a process, the Tea Ceremony activity becomes one activity amongst a number of possibilities that provide a means for the study.

During the activity, they are required to follow the rules of this cultural tradition and demonstrate respect and tolerance toward others, which is considered as an essential element for peace and harmony that incorporate positive interaction. When people display positive interactions in the activity it may signify the harmony of their relationship.

The Tea Ceremony was conducted in the IBCV Activity Hall, participants were asked to sit in a circle during the activity. Participants can bring their own tea sets or choose to use the substitutes such as bottled spring water or other refreshments. Generally, to make a good pot of tea, it is required to pay special attention to the quality of the water temperature, the amount of tea leaves and the type of teapot. To avoid the children from handling of hot water and breaking teapots during the process, bottled water will be used as a substitute in order to maintain the tidiness of the hall and the safety of the participant (see appendix 2).

At the beginning of the ceremony, handouts will be distributed to participants attending the ceremony. The leaflet (printed in both English and Chinese) will be distributed in order to accommodate participants from non-English speaking backgrounds. The leaflet contains the aims and information about the Tea Ceremony. It will also provide the name
of the tea sets, the rules and practices for offering and serving. The leaflet is included as appendix 3.

The researcher will also participate in the activity and make observations on the interactions and communications between the participants. The researcher will provide a brief introduction including the story of tea and its history, explain the tea utensils and will assist and lead participants through the whole process.

3.5 Rules to abide in the activity

There are special rules set for the serving order of tea. The serving will be performed in two rounds. During the first round, participants (the young people) will need to prepare three cups of tea. They need to offer the first cup to their parents, and the purpose is to show their respect and appreciation of what their parents have done for them. The second cup is been served to the tea companion sitting on their left and the third cup is for them.

During the second round, participants will serve tea to a companion sitting on their left-hand side only and the process will be complete when all participants are served. Participants will keep the third cup for themselves. The ‘one way’ rule is about educating participants to be generous and unselfish, to give and not take, to appreciate being served and not to differentiate the taste and condition of the tea (e.g., hot and cold, good and bad, sweet or bitter).
The ceremony of serving the tea follows a culturally significant format and gestures are required. Participants need to put the cup on a tray. They need to bring their tray to the companion sitting on their left. When they walk in front of the companion, they use both hands to hold the tray up to eye level before serving the tea. This is a gesture of offering and to show their respect to the person they serve. Whereas the person who is being served needs to put the palms together and slightly bow their head to show their appreciation of the offer. According to Critchley (1975) and Morris (1994) the gesture of placing the palms together represents concord and is an attitude of devotion. All participants need to wait for the completion of the offering before drinking the tea.

3.6 The reason for selecting the Tea Ceremony activity for this research

The Tea Ceremony was nominated to the researcher by the organization (IBCV) as an initial activity. The aim is to promote the respect and tolerance in their school community, which hopes to bring them peace and harmony. The majority of participants at the IBCV are from a Chinese background. The custom of drinking tea is very common in China and in Chinese communities. Chinese families usually maintain the seven basic necessities to support their daily life. The necessities are fuel, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea. In a multi-cultural country like Australia, even though the community consists of various races and ethnicities, diverse cultures and different languages, tea drinking has a similar function and role. Likewise, the serving of tea is a Chinese custom to show respect towards others.
3.7 Data Collection Techniques

The primary data collection technique used in the project was qualitative in nature. It is based on information collected and collated from questionnaires and interviews. One hundred questionnaires were given out to the school community. Eighty-nine questionnaires with replies were returned and eleven families were interviewed. Within the interviews, a semi-structured approach was adopted, employing open-ended questions of the participants to elicit the relevant information.

3.8 Interviews and Questionnaires

In early 2004, interviews were conducted with parents and students in the school community. The aim of the interviews was to ensure that key issues were identified and to elicit appropriate suggestions of popular activities to propose to IBCV, as well as to provide an opportunity of feedback from participants. Six parents and five students from different families were interviewed. The participation in the interview was voluntary and they were randomly selected from the school community. The insights for the interviews conducted are collated and transcribed and presented in appendix 7.

The objective of the interviews was to obtain a better understanding about the relationships between parents and their children, and to identify some of the issues about working hours and computer game playing. For example, when parents’ working long hours, they will spend less time at home and the opportunity to communicate with their
children will be eliminated. Therefore, when children found their parents are busy at work and paying less attention or neglecting them, they may resort to playing computer games when they are lonely. The interview has used a structured schedule, and the intent was also to collect as many ideas, opinions, comments and suggestions and later to make recommendation to IBCV for their activity planning. A tape recorder has been used to capture the interviewee’s responses. Feedback gained from the participants will be utilized for decisions about other activities and their appropriateness for inclusion in this program development and improvement exercise.

The Questionnaire is another data collection method, which was used in conjunction with the interviews. A total of one hundred questionnaires and consent forms (appendices 4 & 5) were sent to parents and students participating in the research. It was noted that the researcher will join with the group through the implementation phase. Interviews and questionnaires have been selected as appropriate methods for this research as the project aims to explore practical outcomes for the issues identified and to contribute to a series of newly designed activities for the members of IBCV.

3.9 Research Method and Design

Wadsworth (1997) suggested that research is conducted applying the method of planning, gathering of information and evaluating the outcomes of the information gathered to achieve a specific outcome. There are two cycles conducted for the Action Research process described below.
3.9.1 Cycle 1 and stages

Planning Stage

The planning stage involved numerous discussions with the Reverends at the IBCV. The Reverend In Charge of IBCV and the researcher determined in discussions the need for research of the organization, as well as to receive support from teachers and staff within the school community to proceed with the research and to identify appropriate participants for the project.

Exploration/Action stage

An initial meeting was arranged in order to obtain a better understanding about practices within IBCV, to outline the scope of the project, and discuss the objectives to be achieved. The information gathered at the meetings was used as starting points for the research undertaken in 2004. A preliminary review of the literature review was undertaken at this stage.

Observation and Analysis stage

An initial draft document containing content of the questionnaire was prepared that drew together information gathered at the meeting and through the literature review. This formed the basis of the questionnaire and interview questions, which was presented to IBCV for comment.
Reflection stage

The discussions held during the Observation and Analysis stage provided an important opportunity to reflect on what information will be gathered and to assess what further information was required to acquire the output in order to identify what activity will be appropriate for future planning.

3.9.2 Cycle 2 and stages

Planning stage

At this stage, the reference group participating in the project was expanded to include teachers and staff in the IBCV school community. Further, parents and families were selected and contacted and the interviews were scheduled. Finally, a series of structured questions were also developed in consultation with the Reverend, teachers and parents.

Exploration/Action stage

At this stage, interviews with individual parents and students were conducted in order to explore ideas and draw out generalizations around the topic of discussion. This meeting was most useful in bringing together people with a shared interest and for examining different opinions regarding the research. A further literature review was conducted.
following the completion of the interviews. This explored the communication in families, parent/child relationships, issues about long working hours and the issues of computer games and young people.

Observation and Analysis stage

The collated data was then compared to the practice and models outlined in the literature to identify the common themes. The modified questionnaire and interview questions were developed based on this information and presented to IBCV for further review and feedback.

Reflection stage:

It was important to obtain the information from the participants and to re-assess the applicability and effectiveness of their feedback. Upon the completion and collection of the questionnaires during early 2004, further feedback was received. A final research report will be documented and presented to IBCV. Suggestions of activities will be prepared for the future planning in the organization.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Prior to the involvement in the project, participants were informed of the purpose and objectives of the study. The participants involved in the survey and interviews were
provided with a formal letter outlining the purpose of the data collection and requesting permission to use their information in the project. If there were any objections to the use of specific information obtained via the survey or interviews conducted, the participants were informed that it will be removed accordingly (appendix 6).

Documentation produced throughout the duration of the project based on information collected was provided to IBCV for review and confirmation of accuracy. Further, the information provided by participants was treated in confidence and not used for any purposes other than for this project. The next chapter will cover the method and procedures of the data collection. The questionnaire results, insight from the interviews, recommendations for future research and conclusion are also included.
Chapter 4: Method and Data Analysis

Data Collection and procedure

Two different methods have been used to collect data for this study, which included a survey through questionnaires and interviews. There were one hundred questionnaires distributed to parents and students in the school community of the IBCV. Eighty-nine questionnaires were completed and returned and ten families were then subsequently interviewed.

The data collected from the questionnaires were collated manually and categorized. The identified themes from the data were analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher compared the interview data and identifies the key themes, look into the data and find the correlation and analyze the data.

4.1 Subjects

The participants in the research are the students (including adult students), parents and teachers in the Fo Guang Chinese School of IBCV. There was a total of eight-nine subjects with forty two percent male (37 males) and fifty eight percent female (52 females) (see Table 1 Subjects by gender). The largest group of participants (29%) was
in the age range from 12 to 17 years. The smallest group of participants (3%) was in the age range of 56+ years.

Table 1 - Subjects by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56+</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Questionnaire

The participants involved in the study were asked to complete a questionnaire which was developed for the study. The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate a number of
issues which were raised in the research and was organized in three parts. Part one is about work and study hours and how it affects family life. Part two is about computer games and comments from the users. Part three are the recommendations of family activities from the participants.

Part 1 – Work and study hours affecting family life

Work and study hours

The questionnaire results show that the largest group of participants (43%) worked part time and 35% who worked full time. The lowest group of participants was 1% who worked on a casual basis (see Table 3).

Table 3 -Type of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>part time</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full time</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>casual</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not working</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housework</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work hours in a week

Regarding the weekly work hours, the largest group was identified that 20% worked 41-50 hours per week and the lowest group of participants was 1% who worked 18 hours per week.
Table 4 - Work hours in a week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total hours work in a week</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 10 hrs/wk</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11hrs - 20 hrs/wk</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 hrs</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21hrs – 30hrs/wk</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31hrs – 40 hrs/wk</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41hrs – 50 hrs/wk</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51hrs – 60 hrs/wk</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71hrs – 80 hrs</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study hours in a week

For weekly study hours, the largest group was those who identified that 11% studied between 31 and 40 hours per week and the lowest group of participants (2%) was those who study from 5 to 7 hours per week (see table 5).

Table 5 - Study hours in a week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study hours per week</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 hrs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 hrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7 hrs</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 hrs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 hrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 hrs</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40 hrs</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50hrs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-70 hrs</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Long working hour and family life**

With working hours and family life, the largest group of participants (16%) responded that long work hours has affected (in some way) family relationships whereas 15% echoed that the long working hours were affecting the communication within the family. Ten percent of the participants indicated that long working hours have not affected the family. The lowest group of participants (3.4%) felt their working hours are adequate and did not have an influence on their family life (see table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long working hours and impact to family</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affecting family</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not affecting family</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time spent with family**

The largest group of participants in this category was 27% who spent from two to four hours with their family each day. There were 25% of the participants who spent four to six hours, 20% who spent one to two hours, 9% spent six to eight hours, 5% spent eight hours and over, 2% spent less than one hour with their family. Interestingly 12.4% did not record an answer to the question (table 7).
Table 7 - Time spent with family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours spent with family each day</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2hrs</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4hrs</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6hrs</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8hrs</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8hrs and over</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 1 hr</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 - Computer games and users

Time spent on computer games each week

Concerning the time spent on computer games each week, the largest group was 10% who spent from 11 to 20 hours (on computer games) and 8% who spent between one to ten hours each week. There were 5% who spent 21 to 30 hours, 3% over 40 hours, and significantly 66% who provided no response (table 8).

Table 8 - Time spent on computer games weekly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours spent for computer games weekly</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5hrs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10hrs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20hrs</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30hrs</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 40 hrs</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no response</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of computer

Regarding the use of computers, it was identified that the purpose of the use was varied and included 27% use for work, 23% for study, 15% for games, and 33% internet access (for email, chat room, shopping, banking, bill paying and finding information), and 2% provided no response (see table 9).

Table 9 - Purpose for using computer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose for using computer</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computer Games - types of computer games

Data on computer games such as adventure, fighting, war games, horror, intellectual/educational, construction, sport; car racing, strategy/tactics and role-play was collected. According to the respondents, the most popular computer games are the adventure games (24%), 15% for fighting games, and 9% strategy games (see table 10).
Table 10 - Types of computer games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of computer games</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventure Games</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting Games</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horror Games</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Games</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Games</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments on computer and computer games

Regarding the comments on computers and computer games, there were 36% of the participants who were in favour of the view that a computer is good for work and study and learning and it is a good and efficient channel to obtain information through the Internet. Forty percent of participants identified that the computer is convenient, fast and useful and helpful to complete homework in a shorter time. Others commented that computer games both fun and entertaining. They can play games to relax when they are bored and they help to relax when experiencing pressure.

Moreover, there were seven percent of the participants who commented that using the computer is bad for the eyes and body posture. It is bad for the eyes when playing for a long time and not good for study when spending too much time on the Internet. One respondent commented that when addicted to computer games, it would affect social
interaction and communication with other people. Fifteen percent did not responding to the question (table 11).

Table 11 - Comments on computer and computer games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments on computer and computer games</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer is good for obtaining information</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer is easy, convenient and efficient</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer is no good</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No comment and not response</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can computer games substitute for parents?

On the issue of computer games as a substitute for parents, 38% of the participants asserted that computer games are a good substitute when the child has extra free time and their parents are busy and cannot look after them. Computer games help to entertain their children and keep them occupied. In addition, some information and educational programs can help children to be more independent. It was reported that there is no harm for children playing computer games once in a while when parents are not able to take care of them, as computer games bombard the mind and require a reaction from children. It is important to reinforce that children should have experiences like their peers and computer games may sometimes be a substitute of parents’ time.
Moreover, 36% of participants commented that computer games built no particular bonding between children and their parents. It was noted that moral values and virtues are not well covered in computer games, for example, pornographic and violent images in computer games is not at all appropriate for children. Twenty six percent of participants did not provide a response or provided any comment (table 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can Computer substitute for parents?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer is a substitute of parents</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer is not a substitute of parents</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part 3 - Suggestions of family activities**

The two most popular family activities suggested by the participants were family gathering and eating a meal together (23%), and 12% recorded participating in outdoor activities. Sports and travel/excursion have an equal response of 10%. Other participants (21%) suggested shopping, parties, singing Karaoke, cooking and playing chess, while 24% provided no response and no comment (see table 13).
Table 13 - Suggestion of family activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion of family activities</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family gathering/eat meal together</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/excursion/sightseeing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping together, watch TV, party,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing Karaoke, discussion, cooking</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and chess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response / No comment</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 Participants’ interest in existing activities offered by organization

The participants have selected the most welcome activities from the organization’s conventional events which including barbecue (69%), festival party (66%), excursion (62%), family fun day (57%). Other less welcome activities are family food cooking (48%), retreat and Buddhist activities (43%), tea ceremony (40%), community services (39%), book reading club (37%), choir and Taichi (30%), handcraft (29%), Chinese macramé (25%), bead threading (24%), working bee (20%) and patch work (17%) (see chart 1)
Among all the conventional activities provided by the organization, family activities such as a barbecue, festival party and excursions are highly welcome and supported. The rationale may be related to the organization’s practice and arrangement, for example, the organization usually arranges family activities on Sundays or public holidays and other group activities on Saturdays and weekdays. For the family activities such as a barbecue, festival party or excursion, the IBCV sponsors and provides food, beverages and entertainment. Participants only pay a small fee to enjoy the function. Conversely, no food is provided for weekday group activities. For activities such as a working bee or community services, participants need to bring their own tools or utensils and no travel expenses are subsidized.

The reason for less interest in the other activities may relate to the time arrangements. In this study, 79% responded that they were employed and 19% unemployed. If events happen on weekdays, it may not be suitable for the working group and the participation
rate will be low. The other assumption may be that people are happy to come together to have fun rather than to offer their time to work.

4.3 Interviews

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with six parents and five students within the community of the Fo Guang Chinese School of IBCV. The participation in the interview was voluntary. The participants were randomly selected from the school community. The researcher was also the interviewer and there was no relationship between the parents and students interviewed (appendix 8).

4.3.1 Interview feedback from parents and students

The interview schedule contained questions that elicited data that provided a large amount of information. In order to find patterns and meaning from the data, coding process have been used to reduce the data to a manageable form. The ways to proceed included the collation of data with common characteristics and to sort by themes, and then to compile in categories for analysis. This section presents a description of the interviews conducted. An extract of the discussions held with the parents and students are presented.
Parents’ profile

Parent 1

Parent 1 is a housewife and the main form of communication in her family is by chatting to each other. She stated that she is quite satisfied with the relationship with her child. She stayed home together with her child everyday after they finish school. When her child stays at home alone, she assumes that her child may surf the net, study or talk to their friends on the telephone. She will also go out to swim a few times a week with her child and yumcha is the family activity. When they go to yumcha, they can get together, chat and enjoy the day.

Parent 2

Parent 2 owns his business and works long hours. After work, he basically does not have too much activity, except watching television or having dinner and talking together with his children during dinnertime. Although he was very busy with his work, during the holidays he will go to yumcha with his children and find ways to entertain them. When he is at work, he will telephone his children as a way of communicating with them.

Parent 3

Parent 3 is a father working full-time and works considerable overtime every day but he does not feel he is working longer hours. He likes to go to yumcha with his family. He does not feel that long hours work will affect his family life. His way of communicating
with his children is talking with them after dinner and watching television together. His relationship with his children is good and he said he cares a lot about his wife and they always talk to each other.

**Parent 4**

Parent 4 is a housewife. She spends five to six hours with her family in a day. According to her, she thinks people who work long hours will affect family life, as they will spend less time at home.

**Parent 5**

Parent 5 is not working now but he worked long hours in the past. He knows some people work long hours but he has not discussed if the long working hours affects their family life. His favourite activity is reading and he is doing activities separately with his partner and they sometimes go swimming together. On average he will spend about four hours a day with his family.

**Parent 6**

Parent 6 is a working mother. She works fulltime seven days a week for about 12 hours a day. Her children study full time and work part time at night. She feels the long work hours affect her family life. She does not think compute games or television are a good substitute for children when parents are busy.
Students Profile

Student 1
Student 1 works full time and she feels she is working longer hours than she would like. She does not feel her long work hours affect her family life, because when she arrives home from work, her family members are all at home and she is used to this living style. She described her relationship with her parents as good but not very close. She also said that although she cannot quite express her feelings often her family members take care of each other and care about each other. The time that she spends with her family is about two to three hours a day but only a few hours a week with her father.

Student 2
Student 2 works full time and works about two hours overtime a day. She does not feel she is working longer hours and does not feel that the long hours of work affect her family life. She said she used to go out and eat with her family. Her relationship with her family is very good and close. She thinks her parents are very good and she is happy with their relationship. On average, she spends three to four hours with her parents everyday and she would like to have more time with her parents but due to long hours of work, it is hard to find more time. Her favourite activity is to get together with her parents for yumcha on Sundays.
**Student 3**

Student 3 works part time. He described his relationship with his family as good because his mother trusts him. He is happy with this family relationship and it does not need any improvement. On average, he spends about one hour with his parent everyday and the activities that he and his family usually participate together are shopping and *yumcha*. His parents’ favourite activity is to sit down together and chat.

**Student 4**

Student 4 is a full time student. When she finishes school during weekdays, she has her Internet time. She uses the Internet for email, but mostly for download music. Overall, she spends about four hours a day on the Internet. She does not play computer games, and she usually spends time chatting on the Internet with friends. She watches television, videotapes or listens to music with her parents when they are free. Dinnertime is the time of her communication with her parents, they talk while having meals and they mostly eat dinner in restaurants.

**Student 5**

Student 5 studies full time and works on a casual basis. He said when his parents work very late he will be unhappy and he will choose to play computer games. He plays on the computer at home, in a computer centre, and at a friend’s place and none of his activities include his family members. On average, he spends about five hours with his family each day.
4.3.2 Insights from the Interviews

After the data collected from the interviews were collated and categorized, it revealed some common themes. The themes show that most interviewees agreed that working long hours have affected family life. When parents work long hours or are busy in their business, they would hardly see and seldom talk with their children. When parents are working or away from home, children could feel lonely and unhappy and they would chat to friends or play computer games for entertainment. It is important to establish a good relationship between family members, parents and their children. The main ways of communicating include getting together and talking to each other or having activities together that help to improve family relationship. *Yumcha* is the most popular family activity suggested in this study.

The common theme was parents’ and childrens’ expectations and their relationship. Most of the parents expected their children to study well, be knowledgeable and to have a good prosperous future life. Most children expected their parent to trust them, understand them and spend more time with them. Although some parents and children described that they have good relationship with their family and no need to further improve, but the data shows that parents and children do not quite understand each other.

The general consensus for playing computer games is good when having suitable choices and time planning, especially as a balance of play, study and relaxation. However,
computer games and television are not a good substitute for children while parents are busy.

4.4 Discussion of interview data

This section will present a discussion of the long working hours and the effect on communication and relationship between parents and children. The suggestions and comments about computer games and their correlation, anticipation and recommendation are also included.

4.4.1 Long working hour affecting communication and relationship between parents and children

The data of the interviews provided support for the notion that parents working long hours affects family life and communication with their children.

According to Parent 2, he feels working long hours affected his family life especially with his relationship and communication with his children. He stated that he has to work long hours to earn a living for the family and this is part of his sacrifice to the family. He wishes his wife could help to explain to his children and make them understand his situation so that it will help to improve his relationship with his children. He does not have many hobbies but he tries to go out with his children during holidays and will find out what they need and fulfil what they want.
The opinion presented from Parent 4 stated that when people work with long hours they spend less time at home, which will affect their family life. Parent 6 also stated that she works long hours and has less opportunity of seeing her children.

Student 3 said that his parents are very busy in their business and they hardly see each other and seldom talk. They only communicated to each other when there is something important or something needs a decision. He expects his parents to trust him.

Whereas Student 1 thinks she may not have the opportunity to improve her relationship with her family because everybody is busy at home. She said when she returns home, she used to talk to her mother around things happening during the day. She seldom talks to her father because he works very late at night and she can only talk to him during his day off. They do not have activities together because her parents do not speak English. However, if her parents have spare time, they will spend it to catch up on their chores. Due to no communication, she does not quite know and understand what her parent’s are thinking.

Student 5 thinks that parents working long hours will affect the family, because they have less communication with their children. For example, when children have accomplished something during the day, they cannot talk and tell their parents. He also said that when his parents work very late and are unable to talk to him, he will be unhappy and he will choose to play computer games to entertain him. He will play computer games either at home, in a computer centre or at a friend’s place.
Student 4 said when her parent is away for work; she feels lonely and will call her friends and talk to them on the phone or chat on the Internet. She suggested that talking to someone is the best. She thinks her mother understands her more than her father and she wished her father could spend more time with her and have dinner with her often.

Student 2 said she lived with her family and has family gatherings and always talks to each other. They usually chat and talk at home. She used the word “harmonious” to describe the good relationship within the family. She said she understands her parents and knows their favourite activities and wishes to have more time with her parents.

### 4.4.2 Computer and computer games

The interview data has also indicated the advantage and disadvantage of using computers and playing computer games. The participants’ suggestions and comments about computer games will be discussed in this section.

According to the participants’ comments, using a computer is good as it helps to learn new technology, knowledge and new ideas from the Internet. It is a good communication tool that saves time and is convenient to store and obtain information. It also provides entertainment. However, computers are not always reliable, and information could be lost.

Other comments on playing computer games include that they are good for eye-hand coordination; stimulates the brain and reaction. It also helps to relax working people and
student’s mind especially when they are tired after work or studies. It is good to keep students occupied and to stay home, because if they do not spend time playing computer games, they might go out anyway.

The disadvantage of playing computer games is bad for the eyes, no good for the back and posture, and waste study time when playing too long. It is no good for children playing long hours and in a close distance in front of the screen. Sex and violent computer games are bad for children.

a. Comments and suggestions about computer games

Comments for playing computer games including the choices of computer games should be suitable for the viewer’s age and avoiding violence or sex computer program. Parents should supervise and give guidance to younger children when they play computer games. Students should have self-control about the playing time and choose appropriate games. The most important thing is to find the balance of playtime and study.

Suggestions of using computers include not putting a computer in child’s bedroom, as it is too convenient to access. It is better to install it in a separate room to avoid children spending too much time with their computer. If the access to the computer is under a parent’s supervision, it might help to have some time and quality control of computer usage. It is clear that children should play together with other children. When children are playing with their peers they also learn how to get along with others.
b. Comments on addiction to computer games

The interview data revealed different views about addiction. According to Parent 5, a student addicted is one who plays computer games right after he comes back from school and keeps playing continuously for three hours.

Student 2 comments that addiction means to keep playing computer games without control and non-stop, sometimes even unable to respond to others and to lose interest in doing other activities. The reasons for people to get hooked and become addicted are those computer games that charge people to pay if they want to increase their level. To play in a higher level, people will play longer and spend more money. He thinks playing strategy games is good because it will stimulate the brain to think of tactics and skills to win the game.

Student 2 said he had heard that some people became addicted to computer games. He commented that a person who plays computer games every day and plays over three hours could be counted as addicted. He said the most popular games are those that are killing and fighting games, as they can play together and link the game with other players. He also said he has heard once about people addicted to playing computer games for over twelve hours and collapsed to their death. However, he thinks that death is caused by over exhaustion and loss of concentration and the computer game itself is actually harmless. He said some games like Diablo are designed to be played continuously. Non-
stop playing of the game will make the player spend a longer time and the tirelessness with the game continuously may cause the exhaustion.

Student 3 said that she knows some people that are addicted to computer games. They play computer games day and night, they are glued to the computer and even play computer while they eat and play more than ten hours a day. The social lives of these people are limited to communication with computer games only. Most of them are home alone and isolated and not open to the outside world. She knows and has seen someone addicted to computer games is unable to socialize with others. She thinks when people are lonely and bored then they will spend time playing with computer games and become addicted. Student 4 said when people are addicted with computer games, they are unable to communicate and socialize with others.

Parent 6 said she knows some parents that have children addicted to computer games and skip meals. At dinner time, children keeps saying that they are busy in playing computer games and parents have to urge their children several times to have their meal.

c. Feedback

The majority of the interviewees believed that computer game and television are not a good substitute for a parent. They commented that computer games and television are machines only and it is only one way of communication and do not provide feedback to children, especially when children have experienced difficulty and do not understand the
context and they are unable to ask questions. Computer games and television are both inanimate; they cannot talk and they have no feelings. Children need the care of their parents, if using computer games and television occupy their children for too long, children will become estranged from their parents. Children need parents’ guidance, supervision and advice when playing computer games, for example guidance for playing suitable games according to a suitable grading. Parents need to spend more time and pay more attention to their children during their developmental period.

4.5 Correlations

The data from the interview revealed correlation in long hours of work affecting family and children:

When parents are working long hours, they have less time for communication with their children. For example, Student 5 commented that when children have accomplished something during the day, children couldn’t talk and tell their parents. Student 1 provided another example, where she would talk to her mother around things happening during the day but seldom talked to her father. When her father works very late at night and she can only talk to him when he has his day off. Her parents will spend their time to catch up with their chores while having some spare time. Due to little communication, Student 1 does not quite know and understand what her parents are thinking. Long hours of work affect a family, and if there is a lack of communication between parent and children it will affect their relationship. Therefore, it is important to establish a good relationship
between family members, parents and their children. The way of communication by getting together and talking to each other will help to improve the parent and child relationship. According to the interview data, watching television, having dinner at home or eating in a restaurant together are suggested as family activities and the most popular family activity is yumcha.

Most parents expected their children to study well, learn more knowledge and have a good and prosperous life in the future. They considered the computer is an information tool for their studies and playing computer games will waste student’s study time. Thus, parents worry about their children's access to unsuitable games which elicit the choice of computer games. For example Parents 2 suggested educational and intellectual games and Parent 5 suggested activities such as art and craft or building blocks. It must be acknowledged that students have different choices such as Student 5 who plays adventure and role-play computer games, while Student 3 stated that strategy computer are his favourite because he thinks playing strategy computer games will stimulate the brain to think of the tactics and skills to win the game.

Although most of the feedbacks for playing computer games are apparently negative, however, Student 5 commented that playing computer games can train the younger students with their co-ordination because a lot of video games are very colourful. According to what he has learnt about neurology from his university study, stated that when children look at the colour, they have the view of colour input, and the nerve fibres that contact with the brain which will help to train the development of the young children.
Therefore his argument provided support that playing computer games that is not entirely harmful.

In essence, all parents participating in the interviews are from a Chinese background, and the interview results have revealed a significant correlation that language may be the communication barrier between some of the non-English speaking parents and their children example such as feedback from Student 1. It may also be a reason for parents who do not participate in activities together with their children due to language barrier.

The interview data has revealed that more of parents’ times are spent with their children is a need and it is also an element to improve parent/children communications. Therefore, it is anticipated that parents should care more and spend more time with their children, as children have different needs during their development stages.

The data has also disclosed that the advantage of Internet surfing and playing computer games will improve computer literacy among people. Most of the parents’ opposition to the playing of computer games is due to their expectation of their children. Parents worry about their child’s health, the access of unsuitable games and spent too much time playing computer games and being addicted, but their major concern was wasting of study time. Inference to the annotation from Parent 4 and Student 5, they commented that playing on a computer for three hours a day would be count as addicted. However, if children or students can play computer games with control and balance, the playtime, study and rest, playing of computer game is good. Parents should not have a bias against
their children, as playing computer games are just a different means of entertainment like other people reading a book.

### 4.6 The identified changes that the study has brought about

As a result of this research study at the IBCV, it has put the organization in the place to strengthen the awareness to their school community. The changes will include the design of activities, such as to arrange more family activities on Sundays, public holidays and school holidays in order to encourage the families to participate. In the management area, to increase the funding to support the transportation for weekday activities in order to enable the whole community to participate and not be restricted by transport as well as to sponsor food and beverage for all activities. Additional supports to the community is to recruit bilingual interpreters for parents from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Through the interviews, the study has provided the opportunity for the parents and students to express their feelings, needs and concerns. An appreciation that the parents should be more focused on their children. The key thing that children need is their parent’s time, both ‘hang around time’ and ‘focus time’. Parents need to be more concentrated in their quality time with the children and the work/life balance is important to parents.
The organization and the school community have both benefited from the study, as issues have been identified and the concerns/ perceptions have addressed as well as bringing a change in attitude and action processes among the organization’s management, parents and students within the community.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the project, discussing the changes of the organization and the attitudes of parents and students.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

The study undertaken has confirmed the organization’s perception about long work hours of parents and computer playing of young people in their school community. Through the review of selected literature, the conducting of the tea ceremony and a range of interviews has provided the opportunity to undertake extensive research in the IBCV. Through the information gathered and discussions with the stakeholders of the project, light has been shed on the importance of establishing a workable and defined objective for the research. Upon the completion of this research study, activities suggested by the participants will be considered by IBCV and will become a specific reference and recommendations for future planning management.

Action research was found to be a useful methodology for the research, as it provided the most appropriate process to explore the practical outcomes identified that contributes to a new form of understanding. The cycles of research provided a solid basis to plan, explore, observe, analyze and reflect. Through the different cycles of trial and feedback from the participants have helped to determine and incorporate the findings into a final version of the research for IBCV.

The opportunity for working with the reverends, staff, teachers, parents and students has provided a greater understanding about the organization’s functions and expectations. It has been beneficial for establishing potential networks within the organization. Moreover, the participation in the study along with the interviews gave the school community an
opportunity to voice their comments and concerns, to speak out and be heard individually. This has highlighted a series of needs within the school community. It is clear that the organization’s concerns about long working hours and the relationship of computer games have impacted on the deteriorating of communication between parents and their children are confirmed.

Family life nowadays is often difficult as stress levels within the home increase with parents and children trying and fit in all their chores, tasks and activities into a crowded time frame. Therefore, long hours at work and the associated stress can be damaging in the long term for families. Sarason (1994) has indicated that social support is an effective strategy for coping with stress, therefore, the organization should consider being more engaging through providing a range of worthwhile and valued activities for families while supporting the school community to accomplish their beliefs of “Offer others joy; offer others hope” by helping and influencing others in a positive way and to interact with harmony.

The Tea Ceremony activity was not only a means to open the study of this project but also to provide a cultural activity for IBCV school community. Participation in organized activities is an important element of a child’s social development, and cultural activities enrich the learning process and contribute to current and future wellbeing, that is to respect, to be tolerant and patience. The activity has also provided the opportunity for parents and children to interact and socialize within their community.
The Action Research approach was well suited to conducting research in the workplaces such as IBCV which focus on improving the practices. It is useful because it offered a systematic approach to the definition (what), solution (how) and evaluation (why) of identified problems. While undertaking the study, the researcher has gained the knowledge through the process of the continuous cycle of steps in the proactive research which is beneficial in developing a practical framework for IBCV’s future activities planning.

During the design of questionnaires, the researcher has learned the technique for writing appropriate questions. For example, the sequence of questions and responses which produced a structure and lead to obtain the information desired. The researcher has also learnt interview and communication skills (such as attending, eye contact, patience and responses) which help to encourage the interviewer to talk freely during the interview. The researcher has also learnt the skill to utilize the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which is a software package used for conducting statistical analyses, manipulating data, and generating tables and graphs that summarize data.

This study has changed the organization in the way of operation and management such as more open and takes suggestions from the school community. This research is another way for the organization to know more about the school community’s needs and interest, to hearing of people’s voice as well as reflections on activities whether they are worth to keep or change. The knowledge and skills gained through the processes undertaken during the research was valuable.
Specific aspects of the methodology applied in the research and approach taken are relevant and transferable to other projects such as small scale research in education, social services, health and social care. The outcome of the research has identified the most welcome activities; the feedback and reception about the existing activities provided by the participants are beneficial for future activity planning.

The proactive action research cycles enabled the researcher, the participants and the organization the opportunity to be involved and informed in the ongoing research processes. At each stage of the research the discussions between the researcher and the participants enable a free flow of ideas that were continually incorporated and acted on. Through an understanding and appreciation of the stages the researcher and the parents were able to better inform the organization as to the most appropriate activities to assist future developments.

In conclusion, there are a range of different recommendations for families, such as when computer games are administered by parents, computer games can offer many interesting and challenging experiences to children. For example, when parents invest in a computer, make sure it is set up in an open area such as a lounge room and not in their child’s room as it makes it easier to monitor the amount of time spent on it. For children, getting their peers involved when playing computer games can prevent social isolation while promoting effective communication. Secondly is a suggestion to the school: Educational and non-violent games are encouraged to be installed on school computer systems as it allows the child to have fun while they learn in an easily controlled environment.
Although the Tea Ceremony in this study encouraged communication between the children and their parents, however, most adolescents found such an activity plain and boring as they are confined in a small indoor area. It should be noted that the ritualistic aspects of the Tea Ceremony were not necessarily appreciated by the children as much as had been anticipated. This added to the perception that the students would have preferred to be doing some physical outdoor activities instead. Therefore in future studies, outdoor activities which might appeal more to families are suggested. Activities and games such as tug-of-war and outdoor games do not confine participants in a small enclosed environment, but allows them to be free while promoting essential communication and cooperation in order to succeed in each activity. The researcher also found that it is not necessary to include the Tea Ceremony activity in the next cycle of research as parents and students were able to express their feelings, and comment to the organization regarding their interest, needs and reflections. This is a major finding as it was not anticipated at the commencement of the study.

Finally, in order to establish and strengthen the bonds between family members, it is recommended that activity such as eating dinner together (as often as possible) and offering a chance for everyone to hear each other’s news. Staying together and sharing a meal helps to create a deeper closeness among people. To find some activity that the whole family can have fun together will also help to bring the balance and keeping family members in touch with one another. To further improve the services and relationship between the organization and school community, research study will be recommended to be continued and conducted every alternate year. Before this study, concerns will only
identified anecdotally by staff, in future, it will be beneficial to designate a liaison person in the school community to advocate for the families and reflect on the organization before any concerns changed into an issue.
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Appendices

Appendix 1  Letter of approval
Appendix 2  Tea Ceremony activity photographs
Appendix 3  Tea Ceremony handouts
Appendix 4  Sample of questionnaire
Appendix 5  Consent form
Appendix 6  Formal letter to participants (Plain Language Statement)
Appendix 7  Interview transcripts