

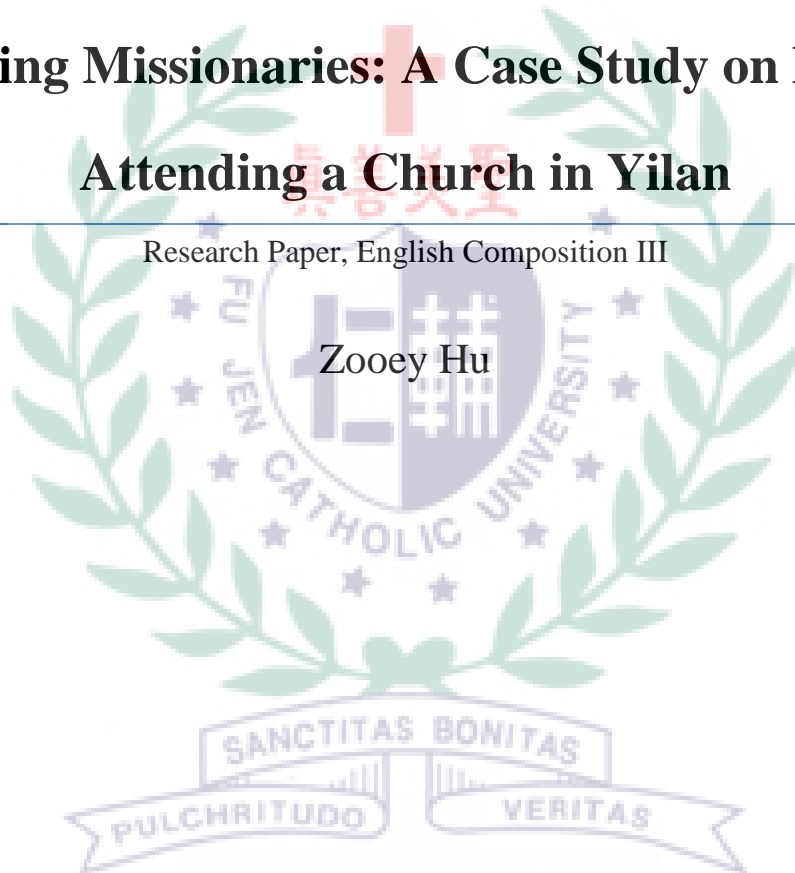
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

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**Taiwanese Parents' Views on Their Children
Becoming Missionaries: A Case Study on Parents
Attending a Church in Yilan**

Research Paper, English Composition III

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Taiwanese Parents' Views on Their Children Becoming Missionaries: A Case Study on Parents Attending a Church in Yilan

Have you ever walked on the street and stopped by foreigners who keep telling you about the salvation of Jesus Christ? Or have you ever seen the news about people in mid-east were killed for they preaching the gospel? They are missionaries. According to the United Missions of Taiwan (UMOT), an organization that promotes Taiwanese churches to have the missionary's ministry and encourages churches to send more missionaries, a survey shows that only 7 % of Taiwanese churches have the overseas missionary's ministry. Furthermore, there was another study from UMOT, which indicates that Taiwanese missionary ministry is facing some major difficulties. Among the difficulties, one of the difficulties is that there are few teenagers who are dedicated to being missionaries, and the survey tells that the objections of the parents is one of the reasons that causing the shortage of missionaries. In the era sowed with diverse cultures, parents from various backgrounds react to the budding next generation differently, especially regarding religion. Therefore, the findings in the present study would help missionaries and children understand parents' views and help the parents overcome their concerns. And as a result, it may decrease parents' the objections to their children becoming missionaries when they have a deeper understanding on missionaries, and it will also help teenagers who plan to become missionaries to pursue their dream without damaging their relationship with their parents.

From the Bible to thousands of definitions of missionary, missionary is a person who received the calling, overseeing to another countries, practicing God's love, and proclaiming the goodness of God. In Matthew 2: 19-20, Jesus gives the great commission to all His disciples, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Longman Dictionary defines missionary as someone who has been sent to a foreign country to teach people about Christianity and persuade them to become Christians. Missionary dedicates their lives to fulfill the great commission. They go to anyplace, from deserts and jungles to urban cities, from wild places to prosperous regions. They reach out to everyone regardless of the skin colors, status, cultures, and so on. Jim Eliot, he and his four of his colleagues went to Ecuador, and the five men together went into this very dangerous tribe. The tribe was known to be violent and be murderous. Nevertheless, they went and all five of them were speared to death. Rather than return home broken and bitter, their wives took their babies in their arms, tracked to the jungle found the tribe and boldly declared the gospel of Jesus Christ to the men who murdered their husbands. As a result, they were so impacted by such courage and they all gave their hearts and souls to Jesus, and the gospel spread throughout the entire people group. Jim was 29 years old when he died. Missionary is like what Mother Teresa once said, “I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.” Missionaries give up their fames or status back home. They lack money to support their lives. They face danger when the terrorists put gun on their heads and pull the trigger, or in Africa, they are ill for Malaria or Ebola virus. They need to endure the adversity to continue their calling. Missionary is a person who sees the needy in the darkest place, hugs leprosy, and helps them to identify themselves as a child of God. They “give what they can’t keep, gain what they can’t lose.” (Eliot)

Understanding the sense of losing, the safety issues and what missionary may be facing during their mission, the concerns from their parents can be more obvious. Parents of Missionaries (POMs), written by Dr. Cheryl Savageau and Diane Stortz, giving many

examples and concerns for POMs, aiming to survive and thrive the relationships with their missionary children and hoping POMs can support their children to fulfill their callings. “I felt we were losing them, and it seems like it would be permanent loss”, the sense of losing for parents is one of the major concerns that they never know when is the next time they can meet or have a meal with their children, for parents it is “a deeper sadness that [they] can’t fully express to anyone”(POMs). To every parent who fully understand or just heard of what a missionary is, one of his or her major concerns must be the safety. If you tell the parents that you want to go to Africa to become a missionary, but what they hear is that you want to fly half way around the world, contract malaria, and get bit by a lion (preparemymission.com). Considering what will Christian encounter if they commit themselves to Jesus Christ or proclaim the gospel to the crowd, they may be persecuted, and that is why parents feel reluctant to send their children to become missionary. Besides the safety and the sense of losing, there are other concerns of parents about their children becoming missionaries. In this situation, it is necessary to understand parents’ concerns to those who plan to become a missionary to pursue their dreams with their parents’ one hundred percent support.

The purpose of the present study is to examine Taiwanese parents’ views on children becoming missionaries. Different from the previous studies, which were more focusing on the percentage of teen missionaries, children’s willingness to become missionaries, or the percentage of churches’ promotions on this issue. There were no studies done to examine parental views on children becoming missionaries and parents who are objected to the decisions to understand each other’s views. The research questions were to examine parents’ views and reactions on their children becoming missionaries, the reasons supporting their views, and the different factors affecting their views. It would help the young people who are

interested in being missionaries and parents who are objected to the decisions having a new level of knowing their parents' views by using this study as a reference. The research questions of the study are in the following:

Central question: What are parents' views on their children becoming missionaries?

- a. How do parents feel about their children becoming missionaries?
- b. How do parents react when they know their children want to be missionaries?
- c. Do different factors such as parents' age, occupations, education level, income level, and degree of religion commitment play a role in the parents' views on their children becoming missionaries?

It is important to understand parents' views on children becoming missionary. Since research in this aspect is scarce, to conduct a survey to collect the data is necessary. Targeted participants are parents, aged from 20 or younger to 71 or older, who are attending a church in Yilan. The survey includes two sorts of research instruments: questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Questionnaires were distributed to the church in Yilan using convenient sampling. In order to make sure the samples could be collected from the diverse parents' views, the researcher sent questionnaires to the respondents from diverse backgrounds in their age, occupations, education level, income level, and degree of religion commitment. 62 valid responses were collected. Besides the questionnaires, the researcher also conducted face-to-face interviews to explore parents' views and to gather more in-depth responses. The interviews were completed in the church. The researcher randomly selected five of the voluntary respondents from the survey to be the interviewees. There were two parts in the questionnaire: One part is parents' personal information, including their age, occupations, education level, income level, and degree of religion commitment. The

researcher would be able to analyze whether the different factors play significant roles in the parents' views on children becoming missionary by this means. The other part is the parents' views on their children becoming missionaries, the degree of support they gave to their children who wanted to become missionary, the feelings of children becoming missionaries, and how they would support or to object to their children become missionaries. Then, the researcher analyzed these responses to answer the research questions.

The interviewees' questions were based on the questionnaires, face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted in a rather relaxing atmosphere. The interviewees were open-minded and were encouraged to provide their honest views and feelings on this issue.

The researcher analyzed the data and came up with the following findings.

First, the researcher analyzed the reasons of parents' support or disapproval of their children becoming missionaries. The results indicate that 42 participants responded that their children have their own life choices, 39 participants viewed that this is God's plan for their children, and only 10 participants thought their children are prepared. Meanwhile, the reasons of parents' disapprove of their children decisions, 26 participants chose safety concern, 21 participants chose financial issues, 18 participants thought their children will be far from home, they felt sad about children leaving them, 16 participants chose health concerns or physical concerns, 11 participants felt their children are not so prepared, and only 5 participants would have a fear of children will be being single and or never meeting a guy. In this part, parents' support were very apparent that most of them gave their children free will to choose their life, and believed that their children's decisions are God's plan, even when few parents felt their children are prepared. One of interviewees who felt his child is not prepared, and he explained that he thought his child need to prepare herself by having a strong Bible foundation. Among

the reasons of parents' disapprovals, concerns of safety, financial and health concerns, and the sense of losing were evidently. Also, according to the results, parents whose concern was the fear of children will be being single that their children are mostly age 18 to 40. It indicates that parents who had this concern are basically when their children are at the age of marriage.

Next, regarding how parents supported or disapproved their children become missionaries, 42 parents would provide support and encouragement, 34 parents would give financial support, and 41 parents would pray for their children. Nevertheless, in terms of the parents who were opposed to their children's decisions, 25 parents would try to know their children's ideas, 4 parents would pray for their children, and 6 parents would prohibit their children from going to church. Parents who supported their children mostly would provide their support and encouragement. Parents who were opposed to their children's decisions instead of prohibiting their children from going to church, most parents would try to know their children's ideas. It indicates that parents will not lose their sense or temper when they disagree with their children's decisions, yet they will choose to understand their children's ideas. One of the interviewees who was opposed to his child to become missionary, he stated that he would support and accept his child's decision to become a missionary when he prays and fully trusts this is his child's calling.

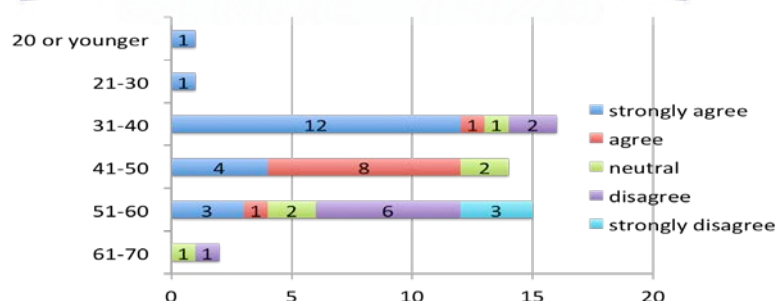


Fig. Respondents' age verses their views on their children becoming missionaries

The figure points out that parents at age 31-40 and 41 to 50 agreed with their children

become missionary the most. In contrast, parents at age 51-60 agreed with this issue the least.

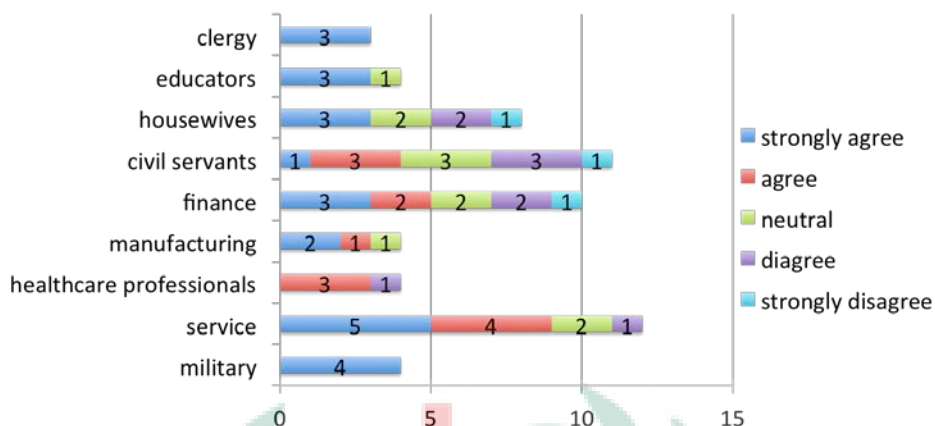


Fig. Respondents' occupations verse their views on their children becoming missionaries

The results shows that among these occupations, parents who were military or clergy showed 100% strongly agree, educators showed 75% strongly agree, manufacturing showed 50% strongly agree, housewives showed 63% agree, healthcare professionals showed 60%, finance showed 50%, and civil servants showed 36% agreed with the issue.

One of the interviewees who is a missionary herself said that she was very eager to see more and more people, including her child, to be involved in the missionary ministry.

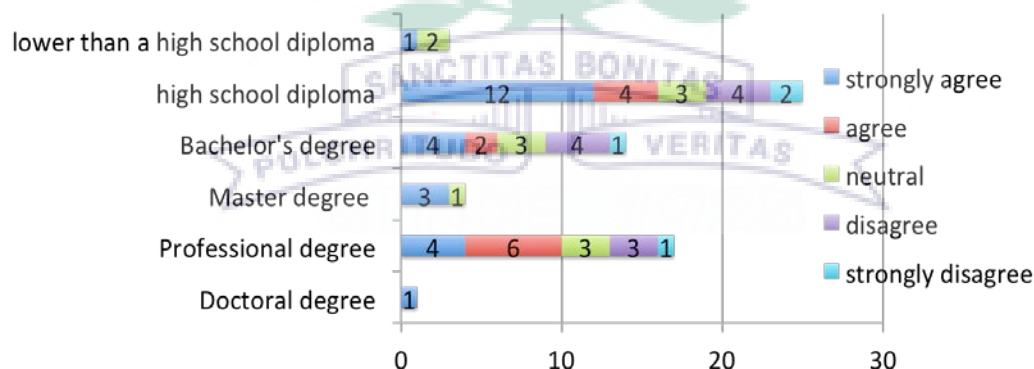


Fig. Respondents' education levels verse their views on their children becoming missionaries

The figure shows that 42 % of parents' whose education level was bachelor's degree agreed. Those whose education level was high school diploma agreed with the issue the most. However, overall, the respondents' education level and the parents' disapproval of the issue

were not significantly related.

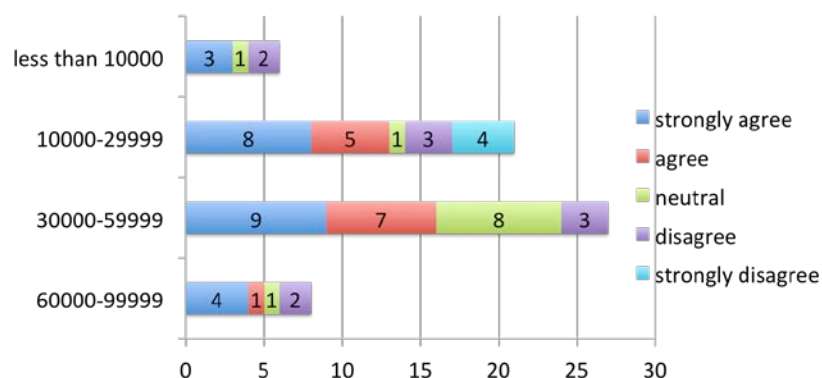


Fig. Respondents' income levels verse their views on their children becoming missionaries

The results show that 50% participants who earned less than 10,000 NT per month strongly agreed with the issue. Parents who earned 60000-99999 NT per month agreed with it the most, and parents who earned 10000-29999 NT per month disagreed with it the most. Almost 20% participants who earn 10000-29999 per month strongly disagree with it. One of the interviewees who earned less than 10,000 NT per month stated that as long as her child is really sure it's God's plan, then she would not be opposed to the decision.

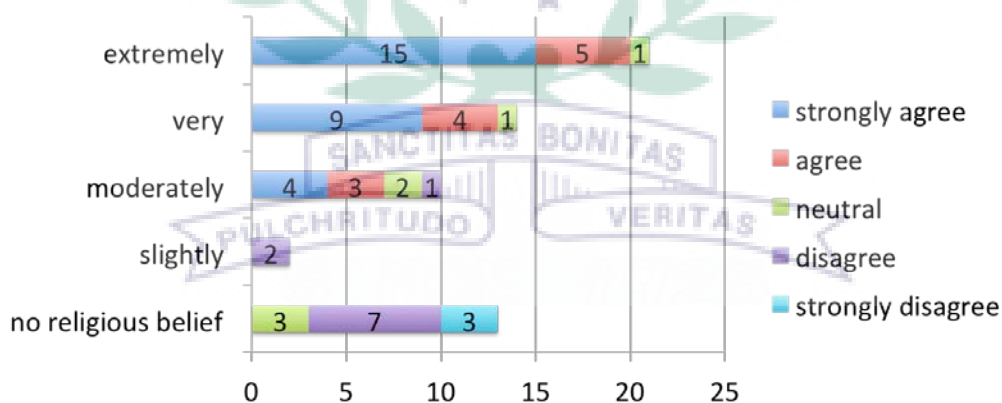


Fig. Respondents' religious commitment verses their views on their children becoming missionaries

It's obvious that parents who were extremely or very committed to the religious belief tend to either strongly agree or agree with the issue. Parents who were moderately committed

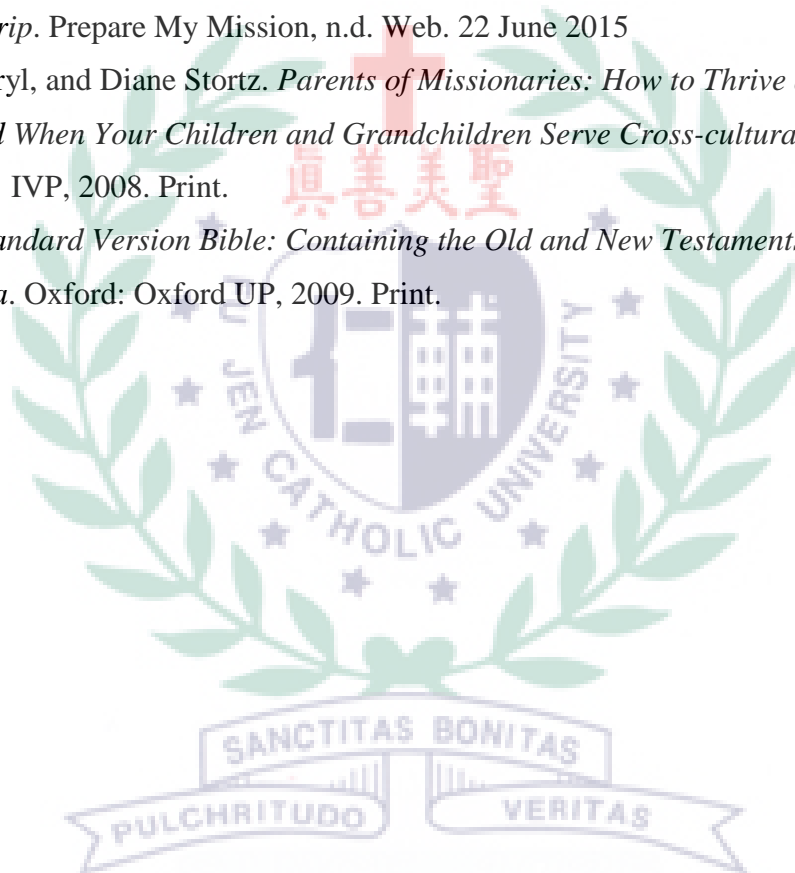
to the religious belief show the average views on this issue. Also, no parents in this pool strongly disagreed with the issue. Meanwhile, parent who are slightly committed to the religious belief or had no religious belief tend to either strongly disagree or disagree with the issue.

In this study, we are able to know parents' views on their children becoming missionaries, and parents are the important factor for their children becoming what they were created to be. Center of the universe, written by Rev. Bill Johnson, he said that "missionary ministry is for those who seem useless but is willing to work with God, God will choose the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame them that are wise"(124). Some parents may think their children aren't prepared but if they know that God isn't searching for people who know Bible so well but is looking for people who love so well and have passion for missionary ministry. Heidi Baker, a missionary in Mozambique, her ministry aims to father the orphans. In her book, Beautiful One, she was preparing for a party for the poor, cripple, blind, brokenhearted homeless children, and there wasn't enough food to go around. As she was crying out to God, she saw "Salad poured over the edges of the pan—constantly increasing, volumes of it, and the bowl overflowed with lettuce and vegetable"(38). Some parents consider their children will lack money or food if they become missionaries, then they should know that God is willing to lavish on their children and He always provides. God gives parents choices, so that parents will know that the reward of saying "yes" is greater than the regret of saying "no".

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Topic: "Taiwanese Parents' Views on Their Children Becoming Missionaries: A Case Study on Parents Attending a Church in Yilan"

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2. How old are you?

- Younger than 20
- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- 71 and older

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Lower than a high school diploma
- High school diploma
- Some college, no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master degree
- Professional degree
- Doctoral degree
- Others: _____

4. What field of professions are you in? (Cross out all the detailed lists. Instead, put broader categories: educators, healthcare professionals, finance, civil servants, military, retails, maids, househusbands/housewives, others _____)

5. What's your average monthly salary? (NT)

- less than 10000
- 10000-29999
- 30000-59999
- 60000-99999
- 100000 or more than 100000

6. How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- more than 3

- A fear of children will be being single and or never meeting a guy
- Other. If other, please specify: _____

15. What will you do to support your children who will become missionaries? (Tick all that apply)

- Financial support
- Provide support and encouragement
- Pray for your children
- Other. If other, please specify: _____

16. What will you do to oppose your children who will become missionary?

- Prohibit your children from going to church
- Try to know your children's ideas
- Pray for your children
- Other. If other, please specify: 真善美聖 _____

17. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

If you are willing to be interviewed about the topic above, please leave me your name and contact information. Your information and identity will be kept confidential.

Name: _____

e-mail: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Thank you for filling the survey!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me: zoeyhoo@gmail.com

Interview questions

1. Why will you support your children to become missionaries? please specify
2. Why are you opposed to your children becoming missionaries? please specify
3. What will you do to support your children who will become missionaries? please specify
4. What will you do to oppose your children who will become missionary? please specify
5. Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?