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Caring or Controlling? Parental Monitoring and its Effect on Negative Emotion and Achievement Motivation of At-risk Adolescents

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Abstract

Parental monitoring is essential in maintaining healthy parent-child relationship as expectation of parents could induce stress on children's emotion but at the same time might motivate them to strive for excellence. This research attempts to identify the effects of parental monitoring on negative emotion and achievement motivation of at-risk adolescents. Quantitative design was used to survey the second generation of residents whom their parents had joined the government resettlement programme, namely People Housing Project (PHP) in the 1980s. PHP provided low cost flats at the edge of metropolitan Kuala Lumpur and overall the residents were from a low socioeconomic status. There were 84 adolescents between the ages of 13 to 18 were recruited using purposive sampling method. The Pearson correlation test showed that parental monitoring was correlated significantly with the levels of negative emotions and achievement motivation of adolescents. The results of both t-tests showed that the levels of parental monitoring made significant effects on negative emotions and achievement motivation among the adolescents. The multiple regression result also showed that these at-risk adolescents who were monitored by their parents were more motivated to achieve than were pressured and had negative emotion. Thus, in times of caring for their children, parents should also be sensitive towards the changes of emotional state of their adolescent children, especially when those children are challenged in striving for excellence. It is suggested that a longitudinal study could focus on the coping method of at-risk adolescents in facing the challenges in adulthood.

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Introduction

Parental monitoring is a set of behaviour which involves monitoring activity, adapting into children's situation, and also observing anything that is related to their education and career (Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). For the high at-risk family, parental monitoring is absolutely vital. According to Fariza (2005), the aspect of parental monitoring provides the element of hope, which is capable to influence a person. Changes must be done within the high at-risk family based on the unsatisfied living surroundings and negative peer influence (Rokiah, 2000). All negative elements will increase the risk of adolescents being involved in social issues, such as delinquency, drugs or crime (Rokiah & Zaidah, 2010). According to Fulton and Turner (2008), parental monitoring had a significant relation to achievement motivation of adolescents. Research by Hoang (2007) indicated that positive significant relationship between parental monitoring on children's education and achievement motivation. This proves that it is vital for parents to monitor their children's education as it will motivate children to attain outstanding achievement. Meanwhile, research on 424 adolescents that carried out by Jacobson and Crockett (2000) showed an inverted relation between parental monitoring and negative emotion of adolescents. In other words, the more parents monitor their children, the less adolescents experience negative emotions. For those adolescents in the period of storm and stress, monitoring them might lead to the outburst of negative emotions. On the other side, parental monitoring could be seen as a source of motivation for adolescents in achieving their goals. Researchers assumed that parental monitoring in a high at-risk family will influence the emotional development and achievement motivation of adolescents. Hence, this research was carried out in order to identify the influence of parental monitoring on negative emotion and achievement motivation among the adolescents who live in the high at-risk area in Kuala Lumpur.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research data was obtained based on the sampling method. Total respondents were 84 adolescents (46.4% males and 53.6% females) between 13 to 18 years old. Majority of respondents were Malay (92.9%), while Indian (7.1%). 85.7% of the respondents live with their parents, 11.9% live only with their mum, while 1.2% live with others besides their parents. Data were collected through survey forms and answered directly by the respondents. The period of data collecting was from February until December of year 2010.

Achievement Motivation Construct. There were six items for the achievement motivation construct. For example, "I'm confident to cope with any competitive situation, whether in academic or workplace" and "I'm aware that my future will mostly rely on my own". The higher the score is, the more motivated respondents are to achieve better. The trustworthiness of this item is 0.639. Multiple choices were given in the scale of 1=Very Disagree to 5=Very Agree.

Parental Monitoring Construct. There were five items for the parental monitoring construct. For example, "My parents make sure that I do well in my homework" and "for the sake of my bright future, my parents always monitor my academic and career development". The higher the score is, the higher the level of parental monitoring. The trustworthiness of this item is 0.733. Multiple choices were given in the scale of 1=Very Disagree to 5=Very Agree.

Negative Emotion Construct. There were five items for the negative emotion construct. For examples, "I feel depressed", and "I feel like run away from home". The higher the score is, the higher the rate of negative emotion. The trustworthiness of this item is 0.685. Multiple choices were given in the scale of 1=Very Disagree to 5=Very Agree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parental Monitoring towards Adolescents Negative Emotion

Positive significant relation between parental monitoring and adolescents' negative emotion ($r = .483$, $p \leq 0.05$) is shown in the Pearson's correlation analysis result in Table 1. This shows that parental monitoring could lead to more negative emotions within the respondent.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Result between Parental Monitoring Aspect and Negative Emotion of Adolescents

	n	Correlation Value (r)	Significant Level
Pearson Correlation Analysis	84	.483**	0.00

In addition, based on the Table 2, result of t-test, there was a significant difference between lower level of parental monitoring (M = 18.00, SP = 2.95) and higher level of parental monitoring (M = 21.19, SP = 2.42), $t(82) = -3.73, p \leq 0.05$. This reveals that parents who are over-monitor their children could be seen as an act of preventing them from being self-independent. Parents behaviour, such as make sure children accomplish homework or task well, or always reminding them to be top student, could become stress for adolescents. The following results showed that adolescents need to have more personal space in order to adapt themselves in adult world.

Table 2: Result of T-Test between Parental Monitoring Level and Negative Emotion of Adolescents

T-Test Significance Level	n	Min	SP	T Value	Level
Low Level	43	18.000	2.952	-3.73	0.00
High Level	41	21.195	2.421		

Parental Monitoring towards Achievement Motivation

Pearson’s correlation analysis result shows that there is a positive significant relation between parental monitoring and achievement motivation ($r = .411, p \leq 0.05$) as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Relation between Parental Monitoring and Achievement Motivation of Adolescents

Pearson Correlation Analysis	n	Correlation Value (r)	Significant Level
	84	.411**	0.00

That is to say, the higher the level of parental monitoring, the more likely the adolescents are motivated to achieve. Result indicated that parental monitoring will eventually affects and motivates adolescents to achieve outshine attainment. In Table 4, based on the result of test-T, there is a significant difference between lower level of parental monitoring (M = 13.65, SP = 2.49) and higher level of parental monitoring (M = 15.18, SP = 2.61), $t(82) = -2.64, p \leq 0.05$. Adolescents with higher motivation to achieve will have the spirit to study and improve further to achieve successful accomplishment. Parents should monitor their children as it will motivates adolescents to achieve, as shown in the research by Hamidah, Siti Salina dan Farrah Dina (2005). The result suggested that if parents would talk with children about their weaknesses that need to be improved, it will motivates them to become successful in future. Parents who does not care about children’s education and achivement, will eventually decrease children’s motivation to study. Parental monitoring indeed forms strong spirit within adolescents to strive through any obstacles in order to achieve outshine results.

Table 4: Result of T-Test between Parental Monitoring Level and Adolescents Achievement Motivation.

T-Test Significance Level	n	Min	SP	T Value	Level
Low Level	41	13.658	2.496	-2.64	0.01
High Level	37	15.189	2.612		

*Missing 6

Parental Monitoring as Unique Factor to Negative Emotion and Achievement Motivation of Adolescents

Multiple regression analysis report indicated that parental monitoring is a unique factor to negative emotion and achievement motivation of adolescents. The results show that parental monitoring is significant towards negative emotion ($F = 27.592, p \leq 0.05$). Variance between parental monitoring aspect and adolescents’ negative emotion is 40.5 percent. In other words, when the score of parental monitoring increased by 1 unit, the negative emotion of adolescents will increased by 0.517 unit as well. Besides that, the multiple regression analysis result has also indicated that parental monitoring is significant towards adolescents achievement motivation ($F = 33.873, p \leq 0.05$). Variance between parental monitoring aspect and achievement motivation of adolescents is 45.5 percent. In other words, when the score of parental monitoring increased by 1 unit, achievement motivation of adolescents will

increased by 0.712 unit.

CONCLUSION

This research was carried out in the area of Perumahan Rakyat Pantai Dalam, Kuala Lumpur and involved 84 respondents which are between the age of 13 to 18 years old. The results indicated that parental monitoring has significant relation with negative emotion and achievement motivation of adolescents. High level of parental monitoring towards adolescents will affect their achievement motivation positively, but at the same time, it is also capable to leads to negative emotions within adolescents. So parents ought to be sensitive to any emotional changes within adolescents all the time. Parents are encouraged to attend meetings, speeches or seminars that held by the Parent-Teacher Association, in order to understand the latest information about their children's education. Parents are also encouraged to join seminars or courses that organized by Ministry of Family and Women Development or private organization, regarding on children's emotional development and communication skills to interact with children. Researchers also suggested that the coming research should involves the aspect of teacher monitoring and peer influence to identify the most effective way to increase achievement motivation and at the same time, decrease negative emotion.

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