

## WhyItMatters

# *Push factor in bringing up kids*



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A recent local study has found that kids with pushy parents – those who set high expectations for their young ones' academic achievements – may become over-critical of themselves.

Such tendencies, according to researchers, put these children at a much higher risk of developing depression or anxiety symptoms.

The study by researchers from the National University Singapore's (NUS) department of psychology examined how maladaptive perfectionism – commonly known as the “bad” form of perfectionism – develops in primary school children here.

The findings support an often-stated belief that the actions of pushy parents may lead to unintended consequences in children.

In Singapore, where there is a heavy emphasis on academic excellence, kiasu parents may push their young ones hard. Some may harbour unrealistically high expectations, and are likely to drive their children to achieve good grades or over-react when they make even slight mistakes.

The NUS study assessed 263 seven-year-old children over a five-year period, from 2010 to 2014. The parent most familiar with the child – this was the mother in nine in 10 cases – was also involved.

Studies done by overseas researchers also suggest that overly strict parenting may result in low self-esteem and problem behaviours in children. In fact, some studies have shown that controlling parenting styles may be counterproductive – leading the kids to perform poorly in school.

The NUS study's lead researcher, Assistant Professor Ryan Hong, noted that when parents are “intrusive”, the children may become fearful of making mistakes, and will even blame themselves for not being “perfect”.

He added that such a parenting style may be detrimental to a child's well-being – in serious cases, it may increase the risk of suicide among children.

Pushy parents may set unrealistically high expectations for kids – for their own good, as some parents cited – but at what cost?

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