

Kids of pushy parents face higher risks of depression

CHILDREN with pushy parents are at a much higher risk of developing depression or anxiety symptoms, according to a local university study.

The findings, according to researchers, are especially relevant to a society like Singapore's, in which there is an emphasis on academic excellence.

Said the study's head, Assistant Professor Ryan Hong: "Parents may set unrealistically high expectations for their children. As a result, a sizeable segment of children may become

fearful of making mistakes."

The five-year study by researchers from the National University of Singapore examined how maladaptive perfectionism — commonly known as the "bad" form of perfectionism — develops in primary school children in Singapore. From 2010, 263 seven-year-old children from 10 primary schools here were assessed.

The parent most familiar with the child was also involved. A puzzle game was used to assess how

"pushy" each parent was at the beginning of the study. Each child had to solve puzzles within a time limit, and the parent was told he or she could help when needed.

A highly intrusive parent would take over and retract a move by the child or tell the child what to do.

The child was then assessed at the ages of eight, nine and 11 to examine levels of maladaptive perfectionism.

Children with intrusive parents are at least two times more likely to

develop high levels of self-criticalness compared with others.

Prof Hong said that when parents become "intrusive", the child may "become afraid of making the slightest mistake and will blame himself or herself for not being 'perfect'".

"Over time, such behaviour may be detrimental to the child's well-being as it increases the risk of the child developing symptoms of depression, anxiety and even suicide in very serious cases."