

PARENTING INTERVENTIONS FOR EMPOWERING EMOTIONALLY-INTELLIGENT PARENTS: A PROPOSED STUDY TO PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

Background: Parents play a crucial role in establishing later patterns of emotional, cognitive and social functioning in children. Parenting practices affect children in various ways, for instance, children's behaviour, school achievement and emotional intelligence. One of the best ways to empower parenting practices is through parenting intervention program. In doing so, theories usually are employed as guidance. Examples of the theories used are Behavioural Change Theories and Attachment Theory. Behaviour-based parenting intervention focuses on changing parenting behaviours that lead to a change in children behaviours. Whilst, Attachment-based or emotion-based parenting focuses on changing children behaviour by regulating parents' and children's emotion. From Islamic perspective, Muslim believed that Prophet Muhammad *salallahu alaihi wasallam* (s.a.w) is the best role model for parenting. Therefore, this paper is aimed to develop an Islamic Parenting Program which holistically covers all domains of well-being, namely physical, emotional, behavioural and spiritual.

Materials and Methods: This paper is designed to propose a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) of development, implementation and assessment of a parenting intervention module among parents in empowering their parenting practices. This parenting intervention module, called Prophetic Parenting Program, will be developed based on Quran and Hadith which is components of Behavioural Change and Attachment Theory in parenting issues. All parents (muslims and non-muslims) from selected preschools will be assigned to intervention or control group. Parents from intervention group will receive Prophetic Parenting Program whilst parents from control group will be receive General Parenting Program. Data will be collected from the parents by using questionnaire for three times; pre-intervention (Time1), post-intervention (Time 2) and at follow-up, six months later (Time 3). Data will be analysed by using SPSS to assess the impact of intervention across Time1, Time2 and Time 3 on parent outcome variables.

Expected Result: Prophetic Parenting is expected to have better result as compared to other general parenting program in empowering parenting practices. Prophetic parenting is a return to the virtuous and honourable principles of the best way of life.

Conclusion: If proven effective, Prophetic Parenting intervention module could be a useful tool to educate parents in future.

Keywords: Parenting Practices, Intervention, Randomized Control Trial, Preschool Children

1.0 Introduction

Parenting is a composite activity that is the sum of many particular behaviours working together or individually, to finally have an effect on child's behaviour (Baumrind, 1978). Traditionally, parenting style can be divided into three : i) Authoritarian – characterized by parents who exercise firm control over their children, emphasize conformity, authority and order, and discourage individuality; ii) Authoritative – characterized by parents who control their children in appropriate manner, display democratic and negotiated interactions and warmth, and encourage independence in children; and iii) Permissive – characterized by parents who are non-demanding, non-controlling and display relative warmth to their children (Baumrind, 1967).

In Malaysia, among Chinese community, parents who are practicing authoritative (37.0%) style were the highest, and this was followed by authoritarian (34.0%) and permissive (29.0%) styles (Chi et al, 2012). Similar to Muslim community, most of the parents practised authoritative parenting style (Ghani, Kamal, & Aziz, 2014).

Parenting style are influenced by parents' socio-demographic characteristics. For example, parents' level of education and marital quality significantly and positively related to authoritative parenting style, with the number of children being significantly and negatively related to the authoritative parenting style (Hong, Baharudin, & Hossain, 2012).

Parenting style affect children in various ways. For instance, the correlation analysis also shows that there is significant relationship between the authoritative parenting style with the children's *akhlak* (manner) towards Allah and oneself (Ghani et al., 2014). Besides, authoritative styles have positive effect on children's behaviour and school achievement. In contrast, permissive and authoritarian styles have negative effects on children's behaviour and school achievement (Johari et al, 2011). A part from behaviour and school achievement, parenting may also influence children's development of emotional intelligence (Alegre, 2012). There was a local study that showed a positive correlation between parenting and children's emotional intelligence (Liau et al, 2003). Moreover, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles also significantly associated with improved children's social responsibility (Afriani, Baharudin, Siti Nor, & Nurdeg, 2012).

One of the best ways to improve parenting practices is through parenting intervention program. In developing parenting intervention program, behavioural change theories usually employed as guidance. Behaviour change theories that are commonly applied by researchers in developing parenting intervention program include Social Learning Theory (SLT), Health Belief Theory (HBT) and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). A part from behaviour change theories, Attachment Theory becoming popular in developing parenting intervention program, especially among psychologist and child psychiatrist. Attachment Theory is different from

behaviour change theories because it changes children's behaviour by regulating their emotions.

1.1 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT) is the most frequently used by researchers to develop parenting intervention program. Based on SLT new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing behaviour of others (Bandura, 1971). For young children, the primary source of model is their parents (Thomas et. al., 2013). SLT-based parenting intervention also is known as behaviour-based parenting intervention. Behaviour-based parenting focuses on changing parenting behaviours that lead to a change in children behaviours.

One of the examples for parenting intervention which is based on behaviour change theory is Positive Parenting Program (Triple P). Triple P consists of five cores. The five cores are safe and engaging environment, positive learning environment, assertive discipline, realistic expectations and parental self-care (Sanders, 2008). These cores are operationalized into a range of specific parenting skills which include basic skills and enhanced skills. Basic skills cover parent-child relationship enhancement skills, encouraging desirable behaviour, teaching new skills and behaviours, managing misbehaviour, anticipating and planning. Whilst, enhanced skills cover self-regulation skills, mood and coping skills and partner support skills.

In term of basic skills, Triple P taught parent on Parent-child relationship enhancement skills by promoting parents to spend brief quality time with their children, talking with children and showing affection. Parents are also taught to encourage desirable behaviour to their children by giving descriptive praise, giving nonverbal attention and providing engaging activities. A part from that, parents also learnt on how to teach new skills and behaviours from Triple P by setting a good example, using incidental teaching, using ask, say and do and using behaviour charts. On top of that, managing children's misbehaviour also taught by Triple P, parents are encouraged to establish ground rules, the use of directed discussion, planned ignoring, to give clear-calm instructions, the use of logical consequences, quiet time and time out (Sander, 1999). On the other hand, for enhanced skills, Triple P taught parents on self-regulation skill. This part can be practiced by parents via monitoring children's behaviour, monitoring their own behaviour, setting developmentally appropriate goals, setting practice tasks, self-evaluating strengths and weaknesses or by setting personal goals for changes (Sander, 1999).

1.2 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is based on the joint work of John Bowlby and M. S. Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). The main reason of applying Attachment Theory for parenting intervention program is because parent-child attachment patterns may be influence their children's behaviour. Basically, children who are having secure attachment, confident that their parents can meet their emotional need when they are faced with any difficulties and belief that their parents are also having the ability to comfort them. Whilst, children who are having insecure attachment, are not confident that their parents can meet their emotional needs when they face any difficulties. Therefore, children may have deal with difficult situations by their own way.

Attachment-based parenting intervention is also known as emotion-focused parenting intervention. This is because the main focus of this type of parenting intervention is on the parents' and children's emotions. Two main attachment-based parenting interventions that

play important roles in reducing emotional and behavioural problems in children are Tuning in to Kids (TIK) and Circle of Security (COS).

TIK follows the Attachment Theory because its main objective is to develop emotionally responsive parenting characteristic. The core component of TIK is teaching parents on five simple steps on emotion coaching. These five steps start with to be aware of the child's emotion, (especially if it is at a lower intensity); secondly, view the child's emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching; thirdly, to communicate understanding and acceptance of the emotion; fourthly, to help the child to use words to describe how they feel and lastly, if necessary, assist them with problem solving (Gottman, 1977).

TIK assist parents to learn emotion-coaching skill that have been linked to improved child behaviour (Havighurst et al, 2009). TIK benefited parents by practicing emotion-focused approaches more frequently in interaction with their children and reducing critical and dismissive of their children's emotional expression (Havighurst et al, 2004). Moreover, TIK also develops parents' emotion awareness and regulation (Havighurst et al, 2010), parents' empathy and children's emotion knowledge (Havighurst et al, 2013).

TIK was proven to be effective in reducing children's behaviour problem in a community trial (Havighurst et al, 2010) and appears to be a promising addition to treatment for child behaviour problems (Havighurst et al, 2013). Children showed significant reductions in difficult behaviour, especially those who had behaviour problems prior to their parents' participation in the TIK (Havighurst et al, 2004).

A part from TIK, another Attachment-based parenting intervention is COS parenting intervention. Marvin et al (2002) developed a graphic to present Ainsworth's ideas of Secure Base and a Haven of Safety to the parents in a 'user-friendly', common-sense fashion that would be cognitively and emotionally accessible to them and that would also guide the intervention. The diagram of COS is shown in Figure 1.

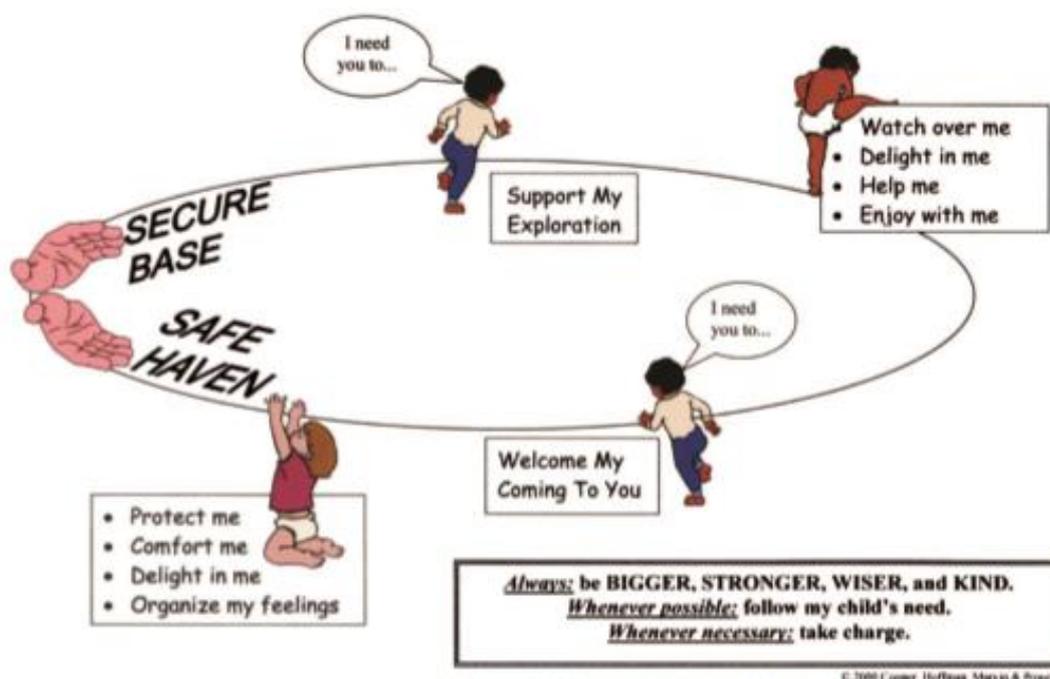


Figure 1: Graphic Representation of Circle of Security.

The upper half of the Circle represents the child's exploratory system and needs, and his tendency to move off to exploration if he expects his attachment figure to be available when it is needed. To the far right side of the Circle represent the child's need to have his attachment figure monitored (watched over) his play in case he needs protection, help him if he needs affective or behavioural structuring from parent, and enjoy activities with their children. The bottom half of the Circle represents the child's attachment system, his need for his attachment figure easily to welcome him 'in' for protection, comfort, delight and to organize his feelings and behaviour when they go beyond his limits of self-organization (Marvin et al, 2002).

Based on COS, there are four distinct patterns of parent-child relationship. The Secure (child) - Autonomous (parent) pattern is one in which both parent and children easily to approach and interact with one another when the child is distressed, and do so in a manner that predictably terminates the child's attachment system and facilitates further exploration. The Insecure, Avoidant-Dismissing pattern is one in which both parents and child tend to minimize the more intimate attachment-parent interactions in favour of other types of interactions often 'distracting' themselves from attachment-parent interactions through defensive focus on exploration. The Insecure, Ambivalent-Preoccupied pattern is one in which both parent and child tend to minimize the child's independent exploration, focusing instead on (often ambivalent) attachment-parent interactions and child's over-dependence on the parents. The Insecure, 'Disordered' (Disorganized or Insecure-Other) patterns in which the parent's heightened fear of and/or anger towards the child's attachment behaviour leads to disorganization and/or abdication of the executive, parenting roles.

The effectiveness of COS in changing children's attachment classification was proven by Hoffman et al (2006). The study finding showed that there were significant "within-subject changes" from disorganized, to organized attachment classifications, with is a majority of respondents were changing to the secure classification. This findings suggested that the COS protocol is a promising intervention for the reduction of emotional and behavioural problems in children by reducing disorganized and insecure attachment especially in high-risk children. Based on COS parenting intervention program, parents are encouraged to increase their sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's signal relevant to its moving away from to explore and its moving back for comfort and soothing. Parents are also encouraged to increase their ability to reflect their own and their child's behaviour, thoughts and feelings regarding their attachment-parent interactions.

1.3 Prophetic Parenting

From Islamic view, parenting in Islam is deduced from the Quran and the teaching of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. Qur'an, the holy book of Islam is accepted by the Muslim community as the main reference especially in solving problems. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, the messenger of Allah is accepted by Muslim community as the best role model in parenting. The principle in Islamic parenting include being merciful, gentle, kind and lenient. Islamic methods of training are leading by examples and regard parents as role model.

Parent-child relationship in Islam is within the framework of responsibilities and rights. Parents have responsibilities for and rights over their children and children have responsibilities for and rights over their parents. Children have a right to kindness, gentleness and mercy, which parents are responsible to show.

On the other hand, parents also have rights over their children. For example, the right to use kind words and show good behaviour. The Quran, which functions as main reference for Muslims, has stated clearly on parents' right for a good behaviour. The children have to be soft-spoken when talking to parents and show them respect and kindness.

“And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much] “uff”, and do not repel them but speak to them noble word.”

(Qur'an 17:23)

On top of that, the parent-child attachment in Islam was promoted as early as when the baby is born. The secured parent-child attachment pattern will be develop after birth via breastfeeding. Breastfeeding offers psychological and emotional benefits for both parents and child. The encouragement of breastfeeding has been stated in verses of Qur'an, as below:

“Mother may nurse [breastfeed] their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period].”

(Qur'an 2:23)

Islamic Parenting is closely related with emotion-based parenting. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w expressed his positive emotion such as love, and promoted others to be emotionally connected with their children. This was recorded in a Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah as below:

“The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w kissed Hasan bin 'Ali, his grandchild while Aqra'bin Habis was sitting nearby. Aqra' said: I have ten children and have never kissed any of them. The Prophet looked at him and said: “Those who show no mercy will be shown no mercy.””

(Bukhari)

The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w also allowed young children to express their feeling and did not deny them such expression. Actually he even acknowledged these feelings and shared them with the children. For instance, in the case of Prophetic emotional awareness. In one example the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w accelerated his prayer in order to meet emotional needs of a crying child when He heard the child's voice. This situation showed that the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w was aware and understand children's emotional needs.

On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w also provided secure base for children's exploration. For example, in Sahih Muslim, Jabir narrated that he saw the Prophet crawling on his hands and knees while Hasan and Hussein were riding on his back, and used to say, “The best riders are you and the best camel is yours.”

Prophet has shown the best way of parenting. Therefore there is a need to develop a parenting program based on Qur'an and Hadith which is intended to return to those timeless Islamic values and eternal Islamic way of parenting. This is the only genuine source for parenting because Islam is more than a religion; it is a way of life.

As a result, this paper is aimed to develop an Islamic Parenting Program which holistically covers all domain of well-being such as physical, emotional, behavioural and spiritual. The parenting intervention program is called Prophetic Parenting Program. It will be developed based on Quran and Hadith which applied Behavioural Change and Attachment Theory. The contents of Prophetic Parenting Program are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Prophetic Parenting Program.

Unit	Topic	Content
A	Parent-Child Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Information about the concept of Parent-Child Relationship ii. Information about the Parent's Rights and Responsibilities iii. Information about the Children's Rights and Responsibilities
B	Parent-Child Attachment Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Information about the ideas of Attachment Theory ii. Information about the concept and diagram of Circle of Security iii. Information about the different types of Parent-Child Attachment Pattern
C	Parent Emotional Awareness and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Introduce parents' awareness of their own emotions ii. Increase parents' awareness of the importance of their own emotion awareness and regulation iii. Practice Prophetic strategies in regulating emotion
D	Parent Emotion Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Introduce the concept and skills of Emotion Coaching ii. Explore the differences between Emotion Coaching and Emotion Dismissing iii. Practice Prophetic Emotion Coaching strategies
E	Parent Exploration Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Introduce the concept and skills of Exploration Coaching ii. Explore different strategies of Exploration Coaching iii. Practice Prophetic Exploration Coaching strategies
F	Positive Parenting Approach in Difficult Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Introduce the concept and positive parenting skills in giving response to children in difficult situation. v. Explain various example of parents' response to children's emotion vi. Practice Prophetic parenting strategies in difficult situation

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study will be conducted in Selangor, Malaysia, using Randomized Control Trial (RCT) Study Design. This proposed study will be conducted within 3 years, from 2014 to 2017. The sampling population in this study will be all parents of preschool children aged between 5-6 years in Selangor. The sampling frame in this study would be list of parents who are having children in preschools age under the Department of Education, Selangor.

The sampling unit in this study is a parent of preschool children. Multi-stratified random sampling will be employed in this study. Nine districts in Selangor will be involved in this study. The total number of sample size, 461, was divided by 9 (number of districts in Selangor) to determine the numbers of school that should be selected in this study. According

to the Department of Education, Selangor, the maximum number of student for every class in preschool is 25. Therefore, 18 preschools will be involved in this study in order to achieve the total sample size calculated. Two preschools will be selected from a list of preschools in every district by using simple random sampling. Each of the preschool in each selected districts will be assigned a number starting from one to the maximum number of existing preschools. A random number table will be used and a beginning point on the table will be selected. The first digit of the first random number will be matched with the corresponding matching number on the list of preschools. After selecting the first preschool to be included in the sample, it will be proceed in order on the random number table to select the next preschool by matching the first digit of the randomly selected in every district. Then, parents from these selected preschools from each district will be randomly assigned to intervention or control group. Assignment into the two groups will be conducted by simple randomization protocol. A table of random numbers generated by Microsoft Excel will be used. The sample size for this study was calculated by using two sample proportions and sample size calculated was 461.

A set of questionnaire will be used to collect the data. This questionnaire consist of section A, B, C, D and E. Section A will ask parent about their socio-demographic data such as age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, income status and number of children. Parents will also have to answer the questions on their child's socio-demographic data such as age, gender and school performance. Section B will be self-developed to assess the parent's knowledge on parenting. This questionnaire will be validated before data collection.

Section C consists of parents' emotional awareness and regulation assessed with the Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS), a self- report questionnaire measuring difficulties with emotion awareness, expression and regulation. Based on Havighurst et al. (2013), the Cronbach's alphas were 0.80.

Section D which will be used to assess the parents' report of emotion socialization beliefs and behaviours was adapted from the 14-item Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire (MESQ). The MESQ asks mothers to rate how they cope with their child's emotions of sadness and anger using a 7-point Likert scale. Based on Havighurst et al. (2013), Cronbach's alphas were 0.87 for ED (10 items); and 0.84 for EC (11 items).

In Section E, Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (CCNES) questionnaire will be used to measure parent's response to children's emotion. This questionnaire is a self-report scale that presents parents with twelve scenarios involving times when their child is expressing negative emotions. Parents will rate the likelihood that they will respond to these scenarios in each of six possible ways (Problem-Focused Responses, Emotion-Focused Responses, Expressive Encouragement, Minimization Reaction and Punitive Reactions).

Data will be collected by administering the questionnaire pre and post intervention. Selected parents of a target child aged 4-6 years will be recruited from the selected preschools in Selangor. Information about the study will be distributed to all parents in selected preschools by preschool directors. Researcher will contact interested parents and assessment of eligibility to participate in this study will be conducted. Parents will be excluded from this study if they do not meet the respondent's inclusion criteria. Parents with children at intervention preschools will be received Prophetic Parenting Program whilst parents from control preschools will be received General Parenting Program. Data will be collected from both

group of parents by using questionnaire for three times; pre-intervention (Time1), post-intervention (Time 2) and at follow-up six months later (Time 3).

For Data Analysis, descriptive analysis will be carried out to examine the demographic status of parents and children, socioeconomic factor of parents as well as school performance of children. Intra-class correlation will be computed to test for any design effect on outcome variables. If there are any designs effect revealed in this result, General Linear Modelling (GLM) will be used to assess the impact of condition (intervention, control) across Time1, Time 2 and Time 3 on parent and child outcome variables. Multivariate Repeated Measures Analyses (MANOVA) will be conducted to allow examination of whether the group means changed statistically significantly over the different time periods. Trend Analysis will be used to examine at what time point change occurred (Time1, Time 2 and Time3). The final method is to look at the percentage of participants who improved, remained the same, or whose difficulties increased following the intervention.

This research proposal will be seek approval from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Ethical Committee prior its implementation. Free and voluntary informed consent will be obtained from parents.

3.0 Results and Discussion

As an intervention program, Prophetic Parenting is expected to have better result as compared to other conventional parenting program in improving parenting practices.

4.0 Conclusion and recommendation

If proven effective, the Prophetic Parenting intervention module can be applied to all parents in all preschools in Malaysia and could be a useful tool to all working parents in government and private sectors. Consequently, this program is expected to empower parents to raise their children throughout their development in a more secure, connected and compassionate home environment.

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Declaration

Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

Author 1: Literature Review , preparing Research Proposal and conducting the research activities

Author 2: Contributing in methodological aspects, planning the research activities and analysis aspect of this research

Author 3: Contributing in Child Psychological aspect of this research

Author 4: Contributing in developing a Prophetic Parenting based on Quran and Hadith

Author 5: Contributing on designing a theoretical background of the research

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