

## PARENTING PRACTICES AND PARENTING STYLES IN UPHOLDING CHILD PROTECTION AND PRIVACY TO ADDRESS PAEDOPHILIA IN MALAYSIA

Siti Nur Fathanah Abd Hamid<sup>1</sup>, Yarina Ahmad<sup>2\*</sup>, Nor Suziwana Tahir<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Research Entity for Socio-economic Policy, Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia

Email: <sup>1</sup>fathanah@uitm.edu.my, <sup>2</sup>yarina@uitm.edu.my, <sup>3</sup>suziwana@uitm.edu.my

Received: 20.05.2020

Revised: 17.06.2020

Accepted: 04.07.2020

### Abstract

The topics of 'parenting practices' and 'parenting styles' have tremendously been discussed in research on child development and growth around the world, including Malaysia. However, these aspects are still under-researched particularly when it comes to the issue of paedophilia. Based on this main gap, this paper presents the relationship between 'parenting practices and styles' and 'child protection and privacy', to specifically address the issue. Quantitative approach by using survey was conducted involving 900 Malaysian parents in Kuala Lumpur. Respondent selection comprised (1) three districts (Batu, Kuala Lumpur, and Petaling); (2) equal participation from both genders; (3) equal involvement of three main ethnicities; (4) age of parents (25 to 55 years); and (5) age of children (7 to below 13 years). Based on Pearson correlation analysis, findings revealed that three 'parenting practices' (involvement, monitoring, and goals, values and aspirations) and two 'parenting styles' (authoritative and permissive) showed significantly positive relationships with 'child protection and privacy' to address the issue of paedophilia ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, one 'parenting style' of authoritarian showed no significant relationship with 'child protection and privacy'. These findings portrayed the pattern of parenting practices and styles, representing Malaysian parents' approaches to protecting children's privacy from being the victims of paedophiles. This paper concludes that parents as the closest persons to children need to play their roles and responsibilities to tackle any issue involving children to uphold their rights.

**Keywords**--Paedophilia, parenting practices, parenting styles, child protection and privacy

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.08.332>

### INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution as a global agenda urges all countries to be more technological competent. More innovative initiatives have been undertaken by almost all giant global companies like Apple, Microsoft, YouTube, Facebook and many others. These innovative initiatives have given people more opportunities: communication has become quicker and more effective, accessibility to education and health has never been better, and information and new findings are easily available through the digital world. This wave of Industrial Revolution can however be a double-edged sword. Despite the advanced technological facilities and equipment, it has brought about, Industrial Revolution also means limitless opportunities for irresponsible individuals such as sexual predators. Therefore, parents as the closest persons have the biggest obligations and responsibilities for children, especially in ensuring protection and privacy and keeping them from any harm including the issue of paedophilia. This situation also calls for a research to be undertaken to explore parenting practices and styles among parents in Malaysia.

Parenting practices and styles are discussed separately in this paper. Previously, research on parenting practices and styles mostly discussed about the aspects of child development and growth (Dehyadegary et al., 2011; Bakar et al., 2012; Hossain et al., 2014; Salehuddin & Winskel, 2016). Some instances include health, nurturing children, child-parent relationship, reward and punishment for children, child manners, and many others. However, there has been limited research on parenting practice and styles, with specific focus on child protection and privacy such upon accompanying children go to shop, sending and fetching children from schools as well as monitoring children on the Internet. Such emphasis on parenting practices and styles to ensure child protection and privacy is important in today's world. Due to globalisation, modernisation, and technological advancement, social problems involving children are becoming

more complex and complicated. Thus, on the basis of this gap, a collective doctoral study was undertaken to explore parenting practices and styles to uphold child protection to prevent the issue of paedophilia in Malaysia. However, this paper only examined the relationship between 'parenting practices and styles' and 'child protection and privacy' to prevent the issue of paedophilia in Malaysia. Relevant information regarding the methodology, findings, and discussion were presented in the following sections.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 'Parenting Practices', 'Parenting Styles' and 'Child Protection and Privacy'

Each and every parent around the world has different ways and approaches to raising children. Some parents can be classified as responsive as they rationally and proactively fulfil their children's needs and wants for their development and growth. There are also some who can be overly demanding; they urge their children to obey their rules and punish children for disobedience. Comparing these two types of parents, majority would choose to be responsive than demanding. However, it is believed that being demanding should also be consider in order to control and regulate children's behaviours. This paper argues that parents' ways and approaches to raising children are influenced by their background, education level, socio-economic, and many other factors.

Debates and discussions about parents' ways and approaches to raising children—or popularly known as 'parenting practices' and 'parenting styles' among researchers and scholars—involved many aspects, especially child development and growth. However, there has been limited research focusing on the aspects of child protection and privacy, particularly in Malaysian context. Due to this gap, this paper focused on the parenting practices and styles of Malaysian parents upon upholding child protection and privacy to prevent the issue of paedophilia. Due to globalisation,

modernisation, and technological advancement, social problems involving children are becoming more complex, including the issue of paedophilia (Ponseti, 2018; Bridge & Duman, 2018). The term of paedophilia was coined by Krafft-Ebing (1886), a German sexologist and physician, who further classified the paedophilia issue as psychosexual perversion. Review of literature surrounding the term 'paedophilia' revealed that there are a number of definitions of paedophilia introduced by scholars and researchers around the world. Seto (2009), in his work, defined paedophilia as 'a sexual interest in prepubescent children, as reflected by one's sexual fantasies, urges, thoughts, arousal or behaviour; who sexually prefers children and has no sexual interest in adults or who is sexually attracted to children but also has sexual fantasies and urges towards adults'.

On the other hand, Hall and Hall (2007) claimed that 'a paedophile is an individual who fantasises about, is sexually aroused by, or experiences sexual urges toward prepubescent children for a period of at least 6 months. The simplest definition of paedophilia is adults' obsession with children, generally aged below 13 years old.

As previously mentioned, the aim of this paper was to determine the relationship between 'parenting practices and styles' and 'child protection and privacy' among Malaysian parents upon protecting their children from being the victims of paedophiles. By using the conventional categories of parenting practices which were developed by Darling and Steinberg (1993)-'parental involvement', 'parental monitoring' and 'parental goals, values and aspirations', this paper intended to determine the current parenting practices among Malaysians. In this paper, parental involvement refers to parents' interaction and involvement in children's life on a daily basis, whereas parental monitoring refers to parents' regular monitoring of children's activities (Spera, 2005), especially on the Internet and social networking sites.

Parental goals, values and aspirations refer to the process of communicating the goals that parents want their children to attain, aspirations that parents want their children to fulfil, and values that parents want their children to internalise (Spera, 2005).

On the other hand, three constructs of parenting styles were used in this paper. Adopted from the work by Baumrind (1993), the three constructs were authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. Like the above discussion on parents' ways and approaches, parenting styles adopted in this paper were also argued to be influenced by a number of factors including parents' background, level of education, environment, situation, and others.

Among these three styles, authoritative is considered most appropriate for parents to apply and adopt as it helps parents to develop a close, healthy, and emotional bond with their children. However, due to different backgrounds, some parents adopt the authoritarian parenting style instead. They strictly demand their children to follow their rules. Whereas other parents' practices which are more lenient are categorised as the permissive parenting style.

Based on the above discussion, 'parenting practices' and parenting styles' were argued to be the critical measures to uphold child protection and privacy, particularly in Malaysia. Thus, this paper quantitatively examined the relationship between 'parenting practices (involvement, monitoring, and goals, values and aspirations); styles (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive); and 'child protection and privacy' in Malaysia to prevent children from being the victims of paedophiles. Diagram

1 shows the research framework developed in this research. Findings are presented in the following sections.

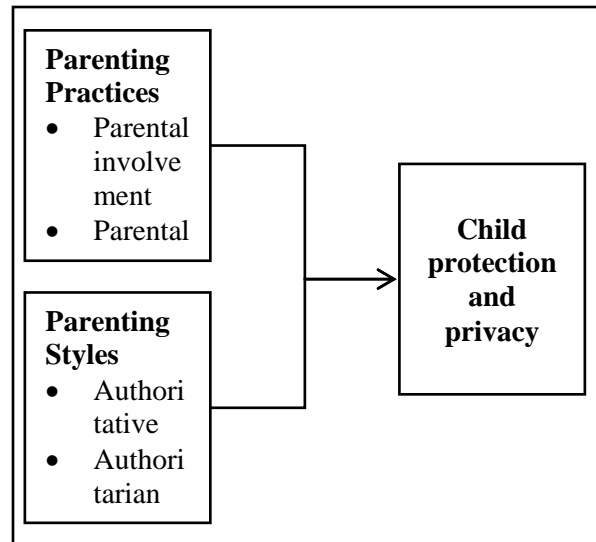


Figure 1. Research Framework

#### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted quantitative method through a general survey in the form of questionnaires involving 900 parents in Kuala Lumpur, particularly in three different areas of Batu (300 respondents), Kuala Lumpur city (300 respondents), and Petaling (300 respondents). The 900 samples were equally distributed according to ethnicity (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) and gender (male and female). Further, this research samples were also selected based on two other criteria of the age of parents (25 to 55 years old) and the age of children (parents must have at least a child, aged 7 to 13 years old). Findings of this research were analysed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) through frequency, descriptive, reliability, and Pearson correlation analysis. Arguably, findings derived from this research could be generalised to represent the whole Malaysian population. This is because; the residents in Kuala Lumpur come from various states in Malaysia. History showed that Kuala Lumpur has been of a diversified population since 1980s, resulted from internal migration during that time: the number still increased in 2000s (Hussain et al., 2015). The high number of internal migrants (from other states such as Kedah, Penang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah, and Sarawak to Kuala Lumpur) have changed the landscape of its population distribution. Hence, the samples of this study were argued to represent the total population of Malaysia.

#### FINDINGS

Findings from the quantitative results of this research are presented in three main sections of (1) profile of respondents; (2) reliability analysis; and (3) Pearson correlation analysis.

#### Profile of Respondents

Based on the findings gathered from 900 parents participated in the general survey, the findings regarding the demographic profiles of the respondents are divided into several components. As mentioned earlier, in term of gender, questionnaires were equally distributed according to gender (450 male and 450 female respondents) and ethnicity (300 respondents representing each ethnic). Frequency analysis showed that the majority of parents involved in this research aged 40 years and below (563 respondents). In term of status, most respondents were married (857 respondents). As for religious belief, all Malay respondents were Muslims (300 respondents), while Chinese

and Indian respondents were Buddhists(274 respondents) and Hindus(282 respondents) respectively. However, there were some portions of Chinese and Indian respondents whose religions were Islam (7 respondents), Christian (35 respondents), and others (2 respondents). In term of education background, more than half of the percentage held tertiary education (584 respondents) and earned a household income around RM6,000 and below. Table 1 shows the profile of respondents of this study.

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Total	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	450	50.0
Female	450	50.0
<b>Age</b>		
25-30 years old	82	9.1
31-35 years old	155	17.2
36-40 years old	326	36.2
41-45 years old	197	22.0
46-50 years old	103	11.4
51-55 years old	37	4.1
<b>Status</b>		
Single	10	1.1
Married	857	95.2
Divorced	23	2.6
Widowed	10	1.1
<b>Religion</b>		
Islam	307	34.1
Buddha	274	30.4
Hindu	282	31.3
Christian	35	4.0
Others	2	0.2
<b>Education</b>		
Never been to school	3	0.3
Primary School	32	3.6
Secondary School	227	25.2
Malaysian Higher School Certificate	54	6.0
Certificate	54	6.0
Diploma	203	22.6
Bachelor Degree	279	31.0
Master Degree	38	4.2
Doctoral Degree	6	0.7
Professional Qualification	3	0.3
Others	1	0.1
<b>Occupation</b>		
Not working	78	8.7
Government	248	27.6
Private	398	44.2
Non-Governmental Organisation	22	2.4
Self-employed	140	15.6
Others	14	1.5
<b>Household Income</b>		
No income	18	2.0
Below MYR1,000	14	1.6
MYR1,001-MYR2,000	51	5.7
MYR2,001-MYR3,000	106	11.8
MYR3,001-MYR4,000	157	17.4
MYR4,001-MYR5,000	143	15.9
MYR5,001-MYR6,000	119	13.2
MYR6,001-MYR7,000	89	9.9
MYR7,001-MYR8,000	84	9.3
MYR8,001-MYR9,000	53	5.9

MYR9,001-MYR10,000	26	2.9
MYR10,001 and above	40	4.4

**Reliability Analysis**

According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach's Alpha score of more than 0.70 ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) is conventionally accepted. Hence, findings of this study revealed that the reliability of all constructs upon examining the relationship between 'parenting practices and styles' and 'child protection and privacy' in preventing paedophilia issue were assumed. The scores of Cronbach's Alpha for all constructs were found more than 0.776. The highest score was 0.950. Table 2 shows the findings from reliability analysis.

**Table 2.** Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of item	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability assumed
<b>Child Protection and Privacy (DV)</b>	13	0.950	Yes
<b>Parenting Practices (IVs):</b>			
Parental Involvement	5	0.792	Yes
Parental Monitoring	5	0.776	Yes
Parental Goals, Values and Aspirations	6	0.869	Yes
<b>Parenting Styles (IVs):</b>			
Authoritative Parenting Style	10	0.912	Yes
Authoritarian Parenting Style	10	0.903	Yes
Permissive Parenting Style	7	0.795	Yes

**The Relationship between 'Parenting Practices and Styles' and 'Child Protection and Privacy' to Prevent the Issue of Paedophilia in Malaysia**

As outlined earlier, the main objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between 'parenting practices and styles' and 'child protection and privacy' to prevent paedophilia in Malaysia. To fulfil this objective, this study conducted Pearson correlation analysis.

This section begins with the findings from Mean and Std. Deviation. Parents were found to have high knowledge about the rights of children, to be protected (Mean=4.6841, Std. Deviation=0.46061). In term of parenting practices, parents showed high commitment evident in their involvement (Mean=4.1078, Std. Deviation= 0.83488), monitoring (Mean=4.2107, Std. Deviation=0.66488), and goals, values and aspirations (Mean=4.5863, Std. Deviation=0.49151). This research found that out of the three parenting styles, majority of parents used authoritative parenting style (Mean=4.3461, Std. Deviation=0.54900), followed by permissive (Mean=3.3684, Std. Deviation=0.78210) and authoritarian parenting style (Mean=3.1511, Std. Deviation=0.88983).

Based Pearson correlation analysis, this study found the three categories of parenting practices, namely parental involvement ( $r=0.118$ ,  $\alpha=0.792$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), parental monitoring ( $r=0.208$ ,  $\alpha=0.776$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and parental goals, values and aspirations ( $r=0.507$ ,  $\alpha=0.869$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) to have significant relationship with child protection and privacy in preventing paedophilia in Malaysia. In term of parenting styles, only two parenting styles have significant influence on child protection and privacy among

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Malaysian parents upon preventing paedophilia. They were authoritative ( $r=0.363$ ,  $\alpha=0.912$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and permissive parenting styles ( $r=0.176$ ,  $\alpha=0.795$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The authoritarian showed a slightly different result ( $r=0.065$ ,  $\alpha=0.903$ ,  $p=0.051$ ).

Table 3 shows the findings obtained from Pearson correlation analysis.

**Table 3.** Relationship between 'Parenting Practices and Styles' and 'Child Protection and Privacy' to Prevent the Issue of Paedophilia in Malaysia

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	DV	PI	PM	PG	AV	AN	PP
<b>Child Protection and Privacy (DV)</b>	4.6841	0.46061	(0.950)						
<b>Parenting Practices (IVs)</b>									
▪ Parental Involvement (PI)	4.1078	0.83488	0.118**	(0.792)					
▪ Parental Monitoring (PM)	4.2107	0.66488	0.208**	0.059	(0.776)				
▪ Parental Goals, Values and Aspirations (PG)	4.5863	0.49151	0.507**	0.195**	0.341**	(0.869)			
<b>Parenting Styles (IVs)</b>									
▪ Authoritative Parenting Style (AV)	4.3461	0.54900	0.363**	0.114**	0.304**	0.478**	(0.912)		
▪ Authoritarian Parenting Style (AN)	3.1511	0.88983	0.065	-0.119**	0.115**	0.000	-0.064	(0.903)	
▪ Permissive Parenting Style (PP)	3.3684	0.78210	0.176**	-0.028	-0.001	0.098**	0.219**	0.004	(0.795)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Research on parenting practices and styles to uphold child protection and privacy in Malaysia can be considered limited, especially when it comes to preventing the issue of paedophilia. This paper indicated parenting practices to have significant relationships with child protection and privacy in the country. Among the three categories of parenting practices, Malaysian parents showed high commitment towards parental goals, values, and aspirations. According to Marilena (2015), a good communication between children and parents represents a guarantee against abuse and neglect. This research believes that if parents communicate their expectations, internalise their values and express their aspirations for their children, children's protection and privacy can be ensured. Marilena (2015) further stated that parents' capacity to understand their own children determines their consideration of several aspirations and act accordingly. Though parental goals, values, and aspirations showed a high significant relationship, findings revealed that Malaysian parents did not neglect their roles and responsibilities, shown in their involvement and regular monitoring of children's daily lives.

Findings of this research also revealed that among the three parenting styles, Malaysian parents preferred to adopt the authoritative, as compared to permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. This was consistent with the above findings about parents' high commitment evident in the application of the three parenting practices. According to Sidebotham (2013), authoritative parenting style combines high level of affection, nurture, and responsiveness with high expectations, incorporating boundaries and discipline. The author further described that the style can be expanded to incorporate three important domains of authority (confidence and competence), empathy (ability to recognise and respect child rights and needs),

and humility (recognising limitations and using skills and strengths). Based on these findings, this paper argued that parents' ways and approaches to protecting children from paedophilia are influenced by their parenting styles, either authoritative, permissive or authoritarian.

The above discussion indicates that Malaysian parents are becoming more aware and responsible towards their children's protection and privacy. This study asserted that the complexity of social problems involving children has urged Malaysian parents to be more sensitive and responsive, especially upon preventing the issue of paedophilia. The seriousness of paedophilia issue is undeniable. Children can be silently abused by sexual predators without anyone noticing (Pillay, 2016; Merdien et al., 2011). The Internet has the most part in this situation, due to the production of child pornography materials. An article reported by Ruxyn (2018) showed that a total number of 17,333 IP addresses involved with child pornography came from Malaysia. The number was the highest in the Southeast Asia. Other than that, The Star (2018) indicated that more than 60% of Malaysian children spend much time in online chat rooms every day, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, and others. In fact, three of four children are willing to exchange their information for "goods and services" (pictures, videos, and sex services). Despite the findings of this research showed Malaysian parents to have good parenting practices and the best parenting style, Malaysia is indeed facing a serious issue of child abuse. Parents, as the closest persons to children should protect and secure their privacy, while keeping them from being the victims of the 'silent monsters'-paedophiles (Abd Hamid et al., 2018).

In today's globalised and modernised world, parenting practices and styles are also becoming more complex, just like social problems. *It takes a village to raise a child*—children in all parts

of the world need care and protection from parents, responsible adults and the society. Addressing the complex issue of child abuse such as paedophilia is not easy. It requires government agencies, non-government agencies, community, society, and family to play their relevant roles and responsibilities. However, this paper argued that parents have the biggest responsibility for children. But what if parents themselves abuse children? Ahmad (2018) in her book said 'all children are our children—we don't have to be their biological parents to take action to protect them. This is because; protecting children is everyone's responsibility'.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) [File No: 600-RMI/FRGS 5/3 (0042/2016)] and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for the research grant which has made this study possible. We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the coordinator and participants of FSPPP-Graduate Researchers in Print for the constructive comments and ideas for the improvement of this paper as well as to FSPPP for the support and encouragement.

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