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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

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