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**PARENTING STYLE ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED CHILDREN'S SOCIAL  
BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY AMONG A GROUP OF PARENTS IN UNIMAS  
KINDERGARTEN**

TAN PEI FERN

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
a Bachelor of Science with Honours  
(Cognitive Science)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
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(2015)

The project entitled 'Parenting Style associated with Perceived Children's Social Behaviour: A study among a group of parents in UNIMAS Kindergarten' was prepared by Tan Pei Fern and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours (Cognitive Science)

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15th June 2015  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
ABSTRACT .....	vii
ABSTRAK.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY .....	28
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS .....	35
CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION.....	51
REFERENCES .....	58
APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM .....	61
APPENDIX B RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE .....	62

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Result of the Reliability Test .....	31
Table 2 Summary of Methods in Data Analysis .....	34
Table 3 Descriptive Statistics for Gender of Parent.....	36
Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Gender of Child .....	37
Table 5 Descriptive Statistics for Age of Child .....	38
Table 6 Descriptive Statistics for Parent's Educational Level .....	39
Table 7 Descriptive Statistics for Parenting Style .....	40
Table 8 Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Children's Social Behaviour .....	41
Table 9 Differences of Perceived Children's Social Behaviour based on Gender of Parents.....	42
Table 10 Independent Sample T-test of Perceived Children's Social Behaviour based on Gender of Parents.....	43
Table 11 ANOVA test of Perceived Children's Social Behaviour based on Parent's Educational Level.....	44
Table 12 Post Hoc test (Difference in Perceived Children's Social Behaviour based on Parent's Educational Level) .....	44
Table 13 Pearson Correlations Coefficient between Authoritative Parenting Style and Perceived Children's Social Behaviour.....	46
Table 14 Pearson Correlations Coefficient between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Perceived Children's Social Behaviour.....	47
Table 15 Pearson Correlations Coefficient between Permissive Parenting Style and Perceived Children's Social Behaviour.....	48
Table 16 Summary of Result .....	50

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of study .....	6
Figure 2 Percentage distribution for gender of parent .....	36
Figure 3 Percentage distribution for gender of child .....	37
Figure 4 Frequency for age of child.....	38
Figure 5 Frequency for parent’s educational level. ....	39
Figure 6 Percentage distribution for parenting style.....	40
Figure 7 Percentage distribution for perceived children social behaviour .....	41



## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to study the parenting styles associated with perceived children's social behaviour. Specifically, this study aimed to find out the differences of perceived children's social behaviour based on gender of the parent, to find out the differences of perceived children's social behaviour based on the parent's level of education and to identify the correlation between authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles with perceived children's social behaviour. A total of 55 parents with children enrolled at the UNIMAS Kindergarten took part as respondents in this study. A close ended questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection in this study. The respondents were asked to rate how often they engaged in each of the different parenting styles and how often their child exhibited each perceived social behaviour. Descriptive statistical methods such as, frequencies and percentages were used to analyzed demographic data while inferential statistical methods like T-test, ANOVA and Pearson Correlation were used to test each hypothesis. The findings showed that the most common parenting style practiced by the parents is authoritative parenting style. The findings also showed that most of the parents perceived that their children exhibited hyperactive behaviour. According to the results of the statistical analysis, only authoritative and permissive parenting styles have significant relationship with perceived children's social behaviour. Lastly, it is recommended that parents and counsellors pay special attention toward children's social behaviour and suggests that future researchers expand the study by wider the scope and focusing on more associated factors in the study.

*Keywords:* parenting style, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, social behaviour, aggression, hyperactive, shyness, disrespectful, acceptable social behaviour, kindergarten

## ***ABSTRAK***

Tujuan kajian ini ialah mengenal pasti gaya keibubapaan bersekutu dengan tingkah laku kanak-kanak di kalangan ibu bapa di Taska UNIMAS. Di samping itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan antara faktor demografi terpilih, jantina dan tahap pendidikan ibu bapa terhadap tingkah laku sosial kanak-kanak. Selain itu, Kajian ini juga mengenalpasti hubungan antara gaya keibubapaan authoritarian, authoritative dan permissive dengan tingkah laku social kanak-kanak. Responden kajian ini terdiri daripada 55 ibu bapa dari Taska UNIMAS. Borang soal selidik digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mendapatkan data. Responden diminta untuk mengadar berapa kerap mereka melibatkan diri dalam amalan-amalan keibubapaan dan juga mengadar berapa kerap anak mereka memamerkan tingkah laku tersebut. Seterusnya, statistik deskriptif telah digunakan untuk mendapatkan kekerapan dan peratusan bagi faktor demografi manakala statistik inferensi seperti Ujian-t, ANOVA dan Korelasi Pearson telah digunakan untuk membuat analisis statistik dalam menguji hipotesis kajian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa amalan gaya keibubapaan yang digunakan oleh kebanyakan ibu bapa adalah gaya keibubapaan authoritative. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan ibu bapa megadar anak mereka lebih kerap menunjukkan tingkah laku hiperaktif. Seterusnya, hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa gaya keibubapaan authoritative dan permissive terdapat perkaitan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku sosial kanak-kanak. Tambahan pula, pengkaji juga menyediakan beberapa cadangan kepada ibu bapa dan kaunselor untuk menarik perhatian mereka ke arah tingkah laku sosial kanak-kanak. Akhir sekali, penkaji mencadangkan agar pengkaji akan datang membesarkan skop-skop kajian supaya lebih banyak faktor lain boleh difokus.

*Kata kunci:* gaya keibubapaan, berwibawa, authoritarian, permisif, tingkah laku sosial, agresif, hiperaktif, rasa malu, kurang ajar, tingkah laku sosial yang boleh diterima, tadika

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Children generally learn very quickly especially those who are in the preschool-age. This is because they are undergoing the learning stage of their lives. Plus their behaviours and personal traits are also developing rapidly during this period. Parental guidance is needed to positively influence a child's development. Therefore the guidance and relationship between parents and their child are very important (Bigner, 2010).

Brigner (1989) stated that children have many things that he or she should learn and accomplish before entering a school. In the early childhood, children learn social emotional skills to build healthy relationships with others. Parents are the closest people to a child and since they interact daily with the child, they play an important role in managing and training a child to possess good behaviours. As a matter of fact, a good or bad behaviour practiced by a child is usually influenced by his or her parents. Brigner emphasized that a "well" behaved parent who is always doing "good" things and saying "good" words will lead his or her child to become a "good" person in future. Following such logic it simply means that a child will grow and become a good person if parents become good role models.

Perepletchikova and Kazdin (as cited in Berg, 2011, p.6) stated that various methods have been used by parents, for example communication style, levels of responsiveness, and level of control to discipline and shape their child's behaviours. However, it is necessary to find out the effect of different parenting styles on children behaviour. Gottman (as cited in Latouf, 2009, p.3) found that harsh parenting methods may lead to certain negative behaviours and so he advised parents to review their own behaviours and be more aware of the techniques used in training children.

According to Pretorius's study ( as cited in Latouf, 2009, p.4), although there are various parenting styles employed by parents to train their children but there are three main components present in all the parenting styles which cause the biggest influence in a child's behaviour which are Authoritative Parenting, Authoritarian Parenting and Permissive Parenting.

### **Background of Study**

Many examples and suggestions have been mentioned in books to guide parents on how to interact with their children and instill good behaviour in children. However, it is seemed that although parents are quite aware of the parenting styles that can be used to teach their children, most of them are still unclear on how to be competence parent due to lack of appropriate guidelines. Hence, it can be seen that there are still many unacceptable behaviours displayed.

A study was done by Latouf (2009) in South Africa because the researcher observed that children at the age of five showed certain less acceptable social behaviours such as teasing, screaming and disturbing their peers in class. Beside that, these children seem to do not know how to handle and settle their daily events. They are low in self-esteem, immature thinking and fearful in problem solving. This observation motivated her to carry out a study on the parenting styles that affect the behaviour of five-year olds. After analyzing the results of her study, she discovered that most of the preschoolers misbehaved due to negative influences from parents. Therefore, positive parental behaviours may lead to more socially acceptable behaviours among children.

A study done by Clough (as cited in Latouf, 2009, p.5) revealed that the teacher claimed that there are 20% of students have disruptive behaviour and 5% of students are aggressive. In contrast, Pretorius (2000) observed that fearful and timid children are more disciplined and well behaved as compared to children who are extroverts in preschool. Latouf (2009) emphasized that

children's behaviour cannot be controlled even by their teachers. She proposed that parent should take the responsibility to guide their children in preventing the repeating of misbehaviours. Kral & Rauh (2010) added that parental model is an important factor in controlling children inhibited and exhibited behaviour. Furthermore, Rhee and Waldman (2002) conducted a study and found that antisocial behaviours are moderately affected by genetic and environmental influences.

Children's social behaviours are easily influenced by their family members, living environment, social and cultural environment during their growing up years.

According to Louw (1998), behaviour can be divided into two types which are pro-social and anti-social. Pro-social is a positive behaviour and is acceptable within the society. Examples of pro-social behaviours are interaction during collaboration, being helpful, and being kind. As compared to pro-social behaviour, anti-social behaviour is negative behaviour that is less acceptable within society, for example aggressive behaviour. Children with negative behaviour will be involved in activities such as bullying, fighting, disturbing others and so on. According to all of these studies, there are actually various factors including internal and external of factors that could influence a child's social behaviour.

Much researches have been done on the issue of children brought up with good social behaviour are more sociable within the society. According to Bigner (2010), parents are children's first teacher and therefore they should always be a good role model to their children by training them up and providing them with a good environment during their growing up years. A competent mother will spend some time every day to communicate and show concern to her children. Interaction between parent and children are important because parent will be more understanding towards their children's need if they always talk to them.

## **Problem Statement**

Many studies have been conducted on the topic regarding internal and external factors that influence children's social behaviour. Most of these studies show that children's behaviour is affected by environmental and genetic factors. There are many children reported by teacher that they tend to misbehave in pre-school. Many children display behaviours like selfishness, aggressiveness, disruptiveness and bullying in classroom. However, there are only limited studies done to determine factors other than environmental and genetic factors in influencing children social behaviour. Besides environmental and genetic factors, parental behaviours can be one of the factors influencing children's social behaviour. Parent is the person closest to a child and is responsible in guiding the child, so parent need to always be a role model to their children. Every parent should understand that parenting style is important in cultivating proper behaviour in children. However most of the parents are still unclear on how to be a competent parent due to the lack of appropriate guidelines. Parents are in the dark about the most suitable parenting style in leading children to good behaviour and the effects of each parenting style. Parents are unaware of the way to encourage acceptable social behaviour and prevent less acceptable social behaviour among children. Other than being knowledgeable, behaving appropriately and being sociable is also crucial to a child. Based on studies done previously, it is found that parenting style is associated with children's social behaviour. Hence, this study is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How do parents perceive the social behaviour of their children?
2. What are the factors influencing the social behaviour of pre-school age children?

## **Research Objectives**

### **General Objective**

The general objective is to determine the perceived children's social behaviour and the parenting styles associated with it.

### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are:

- a) To determine children social behaviours as perceived by their parents.
- b) To determine if there is any different between mother and father of children in term of their perceived children's social behaviour.
- c) To determine if there is any different between parents of various educational level in term of their perceived children's social behaviour.
- d) To determine the relationship between authoritative parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.
- e) To determine the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.
- f) To determine the relationship between permissive parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.

## Conceptual Framework

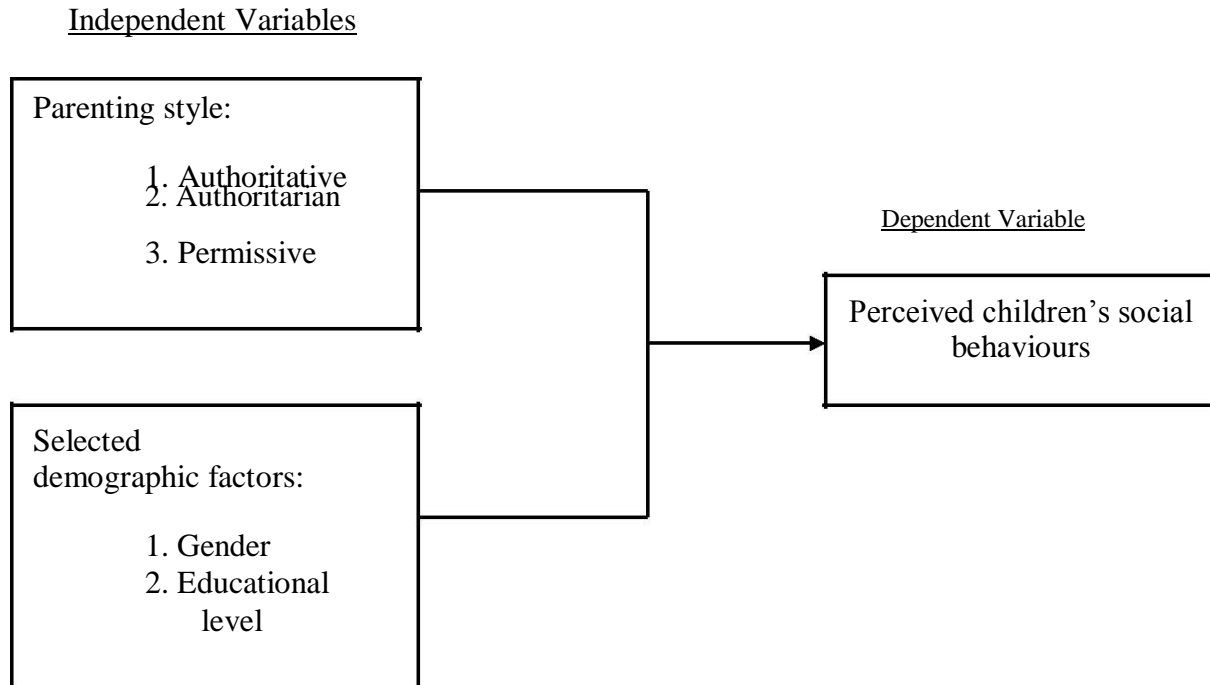


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of study.

The conceptual framework above describes the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The independent variable in this study is parenting style which consists of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles whereas the dependent variable is perceived children's social behaviours. The demographic factors such as gender and educational level of parents will also be studied in this research.

## Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the research hypotheses are:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between father and mother in term of their perceived children's social behaviour.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference between parents of various educational level in term of their perceived children's social behaviour.



**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no any significant relationship between authoritative parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no any significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.

**H<sub>05</sub>:** There is no any significant relationship between permissive parenting style and perceived children's social behaviour.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to all parties that are involved directly or indirectly. Firstly, this study provides parents with guidelines on ways to teach and lead their children towards developing good behaviours. Besides that this study also contributes by suggesting guidelines and providing information to counselors that aids in counseling session. Future researchers who are interested with this topic could use this research as their reference to investigate further. Last but not least this research is important in revealing the ways to help children develop good social behaviour.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

#### **Parenting Style**

Parenting style is the technique used by each parent to guide or lead the children toward the right direction. In this study, the different techniques used by the parents include authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting style.

#### **Authoritative Parenting Style**

Authoritative parenting is a parenting style that focuses more on nurturing and the expressing love toward their children while at the same time setting clear expectations for their children. They are more tolerant towards their kids when they asking them to do something.

Authoritative parents always promote give and take, are well practiced in being responsive and yet demanding. Hence, they are more patient in explaining their reasons and rules to their children when trying to convince their children to do something.

### **Authoritarian Parenting Style**

Authoritarian parenting is an extremely strict style used by parents when disciplining their children. They prefer to set high expectations on their children and expect no objections from them. Strict rules are always set so that their children can achieve the expectations. Parents with this kind parenting style always force their children to be obedient by using physical punishment. Children always surrender without any negotiating or reasoning. Authoritarian parents usually lack concern about their child's needs, they only keep the order and arrange the activities that need to be done by their children, but never realize the importance of understanding what the child actually needs.

### **Permissive Parenting Style**

Permissive parents are always high in warmth and low in control when interacting with their children. They always give a lot of love, a lot of care and fewer boundaries to their child. Parents who assert this parenting style have the mindset that their children are independent and able handle and manage things on their own. However, this mindset is very contradictory to real life. They always treat their children like friends and allow them to do whatever they want. Parents with this parenting style usually do not set any expectations on their children and allow their children to manage and regulate their own activities.

### **Pre-school Age Child**

It is a group of children around the age of 3-6 years. Children in this age group are in the stage of education prior to entering the formal education system. Children who are not mature

enough in their thinking, and so need more care and guidance from parents. This group of children spends most of their time with their parents. Hence, this study is conducted to investigate the parenting styles associated with children's social behaviours as perceived by their own parents. The children focused in this study are preschoolers enrolled in the UNIMAS Kindergarten.

### **Perceived Social Behaviour**

The children's behaviour determined in this study is identified according to the perceptions of the parents when their children interact with others in daily life. The children's social behaviours focused in this study are hyperactivity, aggressiveness, disrespectfulness, shyness and acceptable social behaviour. Parents were asked to fill in the questionnaire by reflecting back on how often their child exhibited those behaviours.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Human development is the systematic change which begun since conception till the end of one's life span (Keenan & Evans, 2009). In this study, the development of pre-school children will be focused. Pre-school children are also known as early childhood children and their ages are around two to six years old. Most of the characteristics of a pre-schoolchild are similar to early toddlers. This study focuses on children at the age of four to six years old. Children of such age group are attending preschool and therefore they would often interact with peers and develop relationships with one another. Since these children are beginning their social lives, parents become very important in shaping their children's behaviour and personality traits which will help them when interacting with others in school. *Guiding children* (2004) stated that adults have the responsibility to help their children in learning the appropriate behaviours. They should teach their children to always be generous in sharing things with others, speaking politely with others and cooperating with one another when working in a team with others. Moreover adults should teach them to avoid inappropriate behaviours such as fighting, disturbing, and making fun of others. Adults being good role models themselves while providing guidance to children can help them to behave properly.

In this chapter, the social behaviour of children and it's relation to child development theories will be discussed. Parenting styles will then be reviewed and its influence on children behaviour will be discussed.

#### **Social Behaviour**

In this section the society's view on acceptable and less acceptable social behaviour within the preschool-age children will be discussed. It is important to understand what is deemed

appropriate and less appropriate behaviours among preschool children in the society.

### **Acceptable Social Behaviour**

Socially acceptable behaviours are behaviours believed to be positive and appropriate for pre-school age children (Latouf, 2009). Altruistic behaviour is an example of acceptable social behaviour, as it is an action displayed by those who love helping peoples without wanting anything in return. Their motivation to help others does not involve any expectation for reward. Acceptable social behaviour among children can be observed when they interact with their peers. The few positive social interactions often displayed by children are cooperativeness and helpfulness, such as when children share their toys and food with peers. Training children to behave and act positively since childhood helps them to develop pro-social behaviour during adulthood.

Studies examining pro-social response among children show an increase in positive behaviours with the rise in age. Positive behaviours among children increase consistently until it reaches the peak during adolescence. Dobson (2002) stated that

children's challenging behaviour is motivated in part by the desire for power that lies deep within the human spirit. From a very early age, they just don't want anyone telling them what to do. They are also great admirers of strength and courage. (p.18)

It simply means that children do not like to be told what to do by adults and hence they fight for autonomy.

According to Papalia and Feldman (2012), parents who are discipline and practiced positive behaviours tend to encourage their children toward developing pro-social behaviours. These parents would point out and guide their children through movies, stories, or television programs that advocate positive behaviour. According to Bandura's social learning theory (as

cited in Latouf, 2009, p.28), children always observe their surrounding and imitate the good behaviours of people around them. Nowadays media has become an effective way to increase children's altruism. For example television program that promotes cooperativeness, sharing, generosity and helpfulness strongly influences audiences' behaviour and thinking. Papalia and Feldman (2012) suggested that parents can guide their children through media or sending them to children programs to encourage their children toward pro-social behaviour.

Most behaviours displayed by children are actually learnt through impersonating people around them. According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory, it is called observation learning. Impersonation is a cognitive skill that allows children to be able to impersonate other people's behaviour that provides them a chance to learn positive things around them. However children will only learn from people they like and ignore people and things they do not like (Gupta & Theus, 2006).

### **Less Acceptable Social Behaviour**

Less acceptable social behaviour or anti-social behaviour is the opposite of acceptable social behaviour which has been discussed earlier on. It is social behaviour that is negative, not appropriate and not acceptable in the society. Parents nowadays are always busy with their career causing them to hardly be able stay at home to communicate and show concern for their children's need. This situation results in children looking for affection elsewhere which might lead to children toward inappropriate behaviour (Latouf, 2009).

According to Bowlby's attachment theory (as cited in Latouf, 2009 ), interaction between parents and their children is necessary to help children develop and grow. Parents who are too stressful in their working life usually are unable to control their emotion well and hence arriving home with negative mood. The relationship between parent and children is affected when parents

get annoyed easily with their children due to lower level of tolerance after leaving from their stressful workplaces. This results in communication failure between children and their parents which in the end causes children to stay silent and display inappropriate social behaviours such as bullying their friends or having conflict with their peer. According to Essa (2003) some of the children show inappropriate behaviour because they desire adult's attention. Children lacking of concern from parents will purposely misbehave to capture their parent's attention. They develop negative behaviours due to the lack of family education and guidance on ways to behave properly. According to studies related to children psychology, training done by parents effectively reduced aggressive and antisocial behaviour at home and in school (Latouf, 2009).

According to Gupta and Theus (2006) there are various factors influencing children's social behaviours, for instance children coming from broken families, mental illness, genetics, lack of social involvement and influences from peers. The possible factors as mentioned above by Gupta and Theus may cause the display various negative behaviours among children. The following are several common anti-social behaviours found in preschool-aged children.

**Disrespectful.** Brink's study (as cited in Lotouf, 2009, p.38) mentioned that children nowadays lack respect to adult as it can be seen often children being disrespectful and arrogant towards their teachers in preschool. Schoeman (as cited in Lotouf, 2009, p.38) said it is possible to have mutual respect between children and adult. Moreover not only children should show respect to parents or adults but the adults themselves should respect children as well so that children would obey what is being said to them by the adults. Parents should take the responsibility of being a good role model to them and inculcate respect since early childhood. Bigner (2010) shares the same view point with Schoeman (as cited in Lotouf, 2009, p.38) where both of them agreed that parents should not criticize their children's personality but instead focus

on their offensive behaviour. Parent should explain to their children the negative effect of negative behaviours and guide them in correcting their misbehaviour. Parent need to respect their children before expecting their children to do the same.

**Aggression.** Aggression is a behaviour that may involve physical attack such as hitting and punching people which will cause harm to others (Keenan & Evans, 2009). According to Dodge's study (as cite in Keenan & Evans, 2009, p.311) aggression among preschool age children are more likely to happen when they fight for favourite toys or playing place. He also mentioned that there are chances children's aggressive behaviour might follow them into their adulthood. Aggressive behaviour can be reduced by giving more sense of security to children. According to Bigner (2010), aggression occurs among children and it is a normal growth and development process. It helps children to discover their boundaries and enhances communication skills with others.

Bigner (2010) believed that aggression among children is often influenced by family and environment. He emphasized that children act harshly and aggressively because they learnt it from their parent. To prevent such negative behaviour Bigner suggested that positive reinforcement is the best way to prevent children from acting aggressively. Papalia and Feldman (2012) said that parental behaviours strongly influence children's aggressiveness. It is found that children growing up in poor and stressful environment are more likely to be aggressive children raised by a single parent. Studies conducted also show that the lack of attachment and maternal warmth during infancy also causes children to become aggressive during early childhood.

**Hyperactive.** According to Rosenberg, Wilson, Maheady and Sindelar (1992), children with hyperactive behaviour are not likely to seat quietly. These children are often out of their seat and moving around rapidly. They are less calm compared to other children and are likely to