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## **Honours Project Final Report**

### **Research Topic:**

**How parenting styles affect young children's emotional regulation  
ability?**

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#### **4. Aim of study**

The study aimed to examine the relationship between parenting styles and the emotional regulation ability of 3-6 year old pre-school children. The study focused on three most common parenting styles in society (Farrell, 2015), namely authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting and permissive parenting.

#### **5. Rationale**

Parenting styles can either contribute or hinder young children's lifetime success and they play an important role in young children's social and emotional development (Cobb and Mayer, 2000; Zarra-Nezhad, Aunola, Kiuru, Mullola and Moazami-Goodarzi, 2015). Whilst the aforementioned parenting styles are widely used, studies showed that many parents were not aware of how their rearing practices might affect their children (Berg, 2011). Also, relatively few research studies examined the relationships between parenting styles and the socioemotional development of young children, despite the fact that parents were keen on developing their children's emotional intelligence, which means the ability to recognize, understand and manage one's and other's emotions (Goleman, 2006). The literature showed mixed findings in the relationship between parenting styles and young children's emotional regulation ability (Farrell, 2015). Because of this, I would want to replicate previous studies by studying the relationships between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation, using a new population, namely families in Hong Kong.

## **6. Literature review**

### **3.1. Emotional regulation ability**

Emotional regulation ability is one of the elements of children's emotional intelligence (Farrell, 2015).

It refers to the abilities to respond to different experience with a range of emotion which is socially acceptable and to delay their reaction towards the experience as needed (Cole, Michel and Teti, 1994).

Children develop their self-regulation ability significantly from 2 to 5 years old. Children at 3 years old can master their impulses briefly by leaving the situation that stimulate their emotion. When they get older, they start to be able to tolerate and handle minor disappointments and frustrations because they have more strategies to manage their emotion such as self-talking and soothing by age 4. By age 5, they are capable of controlling emotion and even use logical problem solving skills. However, some children at this age may still have difficulties regulating their emotion (Family Health Service, 2017; Gilliom, Shaw, Beck, Schonberg and Lukon, 2002).

When children get older, they are more able to manage difficulties and stressful situations by using emotional regulation strategies. Better emotional regulation abilities contribute to children's life in various ways. Research found that children who are capable of regulating their emotion well will pay more attention and put in more effort at school because these children can control their emotion, even

in a difficult situation (such as a topic that is boring or uninteresting for them). Hence, emotional regulatory skills are linked with children's cognitive development and achievement in school (Blair, 2002). Moreover, if children are able to regulate anger well, they will be more persistent and capable in problem solving skills (Raver and Zigler, 2004). It also contributes to children's mental health because if children can control their emotion, they may receive fewer warnings from adults which make them feel more stressful (Gonzalez-Mena and Eyer, 2007; Berking and Whitley, 2014). Apart from cognitive and mental development, emotional regulation ability also benefits children's social development (Barish, 2003). While children are facing some negative emotion such as anxiety, anger or frustration etc., if they are able to control their impulse behaviour due to the negative emotion and have socially tolerable responses, they are more capable to resolve conflicts with peers and be accepted by the other people.

It is known that emotional regulation ability is beneficial to young children's development, in order to help them develop, it is important for adults to have corresponding strategies to foster their ability to emotional regulation. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory (Ryan, 2001), children encounter different relationships with communities and wider society, the relationship may influence their life and behaviour to varying extent. Parents constitute the microsystem of the theory because they

affect young children directly in the immediate environment. Specifically, parents who (1) give high levels of love and warmth with reasonable demandingness, which means the requirements (Colman, Haedy, Albert, Raffaelli and Crockett, 2006), and (2) give autonomy to their children (Bernier, Carlson and Whipple, 2010), are likely to have children with more positive emotional regulation. These findings showed that parenting style is an important factor that influences children's emotional regulation ability.

### **3.2. Parenting styles and young children's emotional regulation ability**

Different relationships are found between several parenting styles and children's ability in emotional regulation. Parenting styles can be characterized by responsiveness and demandingness. Responsiveness means how much the parents accept and are sensitive to children's developmental needs, especially the emotional needs, while demandingness means the amount of behaviour and the rules that the parent require their child to obey and the standard to achieve, some people also call it as 'control' (Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst and Wilkinson, 2007). The followings are the three major types of parenting styles.

First of all, authoritarian parents are generally demanding but provide only little responsiveness to children's emotional needs. There is communication but it is usually in 1-way and directed by parents.



As a result, authoritarian parents set a series of rules and behaviour standard for children without explaining the reasons and caring for child's thoughts and require children to follow all the time, hence, they have little freedom or even none. As a result, it may be difficult for children to learn to think for themselves. On the other hand, parents focus on children's misbehaviour and then give punishment which is harsh sometimes so discipline is often a way to get reward or punishment. (Berg, 2011).

Then, authoritative parents demand children according to children's developmental needs and they have clear expectation, they focus on encouragement and good behaviour. They also set firm rules but they provide reasons to children. Although they still control their children, children have limited choices so that they are able to learn and experience to be responsible for their choices by bearing the consequences.

Their freedom and responsibility are balanced. Parents are more responsive to children's emotional needs and effective in communication because children are welcomed to share their thoughts with parents (Berg, 2011).

Last but not least, permissive parents have very low demandingness but very high responsiveness on children because they are afraid of their children will not like them. Therefore, they seldom set rules and expect children to achieve anything but always affectionate they children with much care and love.

Parents will see themselves as their children's peers rather than parents who provide guidance and limits.

Children raised by permissive parents are allowed to have high level of freedom with no responsibility, they do not need to be responsible for their choices because their parents will do everything to their live.

Hence, children in permissive parenting family usually have low self-care skill and difficulty in emotional development as they used to rely on their parents. It is common to see immature and uncompromising children in permissive parenting household (Berg, 2011).

Parenting practice affects young children's emotional regulation in different ways. Referring to the research, it is suggested that parental responses to children's negative emotions is related. Some parents are used to highly control their children's emotion because they believed that it helps strengthen children's social and emotional competence, but actually it may hinder children to have opportunity knowing the causes and consequences of inappropriate display of emotion. Children who suppress their emotion demonstration are mostly come from the family that the parents provide little care and nurturing but many overprotective behaviors, namely the authoritarian household, because they do not have chance to understand and regulate their emotions because they do not have chance to learn about and deal with various emotions (Farrell, 2015).

Conversely, the research revealed that there is a negative correlation between parents' level of control and children's emotional functioning, which means less parental control on children's emotion can cause a higher ability in emotional display as parents will accept more of children's emotional display which help them develop positive strategies to cope with negative emotion (Eisenberg, Fabes, and Murphy, 1996). If parents are able to coach children constructively instead of controlling their emotions, they will regulate emotion better or even engage in self soothing to calm themselves as parents may become the role model of children's expression of emotion. For example, when mother's anger and contempt raised, her children will also be angrier. As a result, parents who model a more positive effect will have children with higher ability to deal with stressful and emotion-inducing events in a socially acceptable way (Berg, 2011). Therefore, children that lived in authoritative and permissive household are believed to have higher ability to emotional regulation.

On the other hand, some researchers pointed out that although how parents raise young children can affect the level and capability of children to manage their emotion, there is no specific relationship between the children's level of emotional intelligence, including the emotional regulation, and the parenting practices which provide high responsiveness and control children reasonably or even no control (Farrell, 2015).

However, the above studies were conducted in European cultures. It is unclear the extent to which the findings could be observed in other cultural settings. There are only few studies have been done to reveal the relationship between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability. As a result, this study aimed at examine the relationship among the two variables.

#### **4. Research question and hypothesis**

To investigate the relationship between the three parenting styles and preschool aged children's emotional regulation ability, some questions are set and will be addressed in this study. The questions are,

- (1) How did parents describe their parenting styles?
- (2) How did parents rate their child's emotional regulation ability?
- (3) What is the relationship between parents' parenting style and young children's ability of emotional regulation?

Firstly, it is hypothesized that parents examine themselves with different levels of responsiveness and demandingness. Parents who are practicing authoritarian parenting style will describe themselves with high control but low responsiveness. However, for the authoritative parents, they will describe themselves as a parent with reasonable requirements and care. Finally, the permissive parents will describe themselves that

provide much care and love but little or even no requirements for their child. It is because the literature has defined these three types of parenting styles by the level of demandingness and responsiveness (Berg, 2011), so the above hypotheses are aligned with the characteristics of parenting styles which mentioned by the literature.

Secondly, it is expected that parents will rate their child according to the daily behaviour and performance.

It is hypothesized that children who are more able to have socially acceptable response and delay reactions towards a wide range of experience will be rated to have higher emotion regulatory ability. It is because the study included these abilities into the emotional regulation abilities (Cole, Michel and Teti, 1994).

Thirdly, after rating the parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability, it is believed that there will be a relationship between children's emotional regulation ability and the three parenting styles.

According to the ecological system theory (Ryan, 2001), parents is in the immediate surroundings of children which means they can directly affect them. Moreover, although a research said that there is no relationship (Farrel, 2015), most of the found research reported that children's ability to emotional regulation is closely related by parental control and responsiveness (Eisenberg, Fabes, and Murphy, 1996; Berg, 2011), so it is believed that there will be a relationship among the two variables. Furthermore, the

emotional regulation ability of young children will have a negative correlation with the level of demandingness while having a positive relationship with responsiveness because the literature found that children are able to understand their own emotions through parents' explanation and thus develop strategies to regulate emotions (Eisenberg, Fabes, and Murphy, 1996; Berg, 2011). Therefore, the emotional regulation ability of young children will have a negative correlation with the authoritarian parenting styles, whereas the children's emotional regulation ability is positively related to either authoritative or permissive parenting styles.

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1. Participants and sample**

80 Hong Kong parents with at least a child aged between 3 and 6, regardless religion, were expected to be recruited. In each household only one parent was involved in the online questionnaire, and this parent might be subsequently invited for a further interview. If the family had more than one child, only one of the children in the household was involved in the research. Non-probability sampling method was adopted in both quantitative and qualitative research. The participants were recruited by convenience and snowball sampling. The families that I know were first asked to complete the online questionnaire. Then, they were asked to identify other target population and send

the online questionnaire to them.

## 5.2. Research method

A mixed-methods approach was employed in the data collection.

**Questionnaire.** Quantitative research method was used. An online questionnaire was designed by Google Forms and sent to the target respondents. The design of the questionnaires made reference to published questionnaires which had strong reliability and external validity, including, Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) and the Children's Behavior Questionnaire-Standard form (CBQ). There were three sections in the questionnaire. The first asks about the basic personal information of the respondents. The second part asks parents to indicate their parenting styles. The third covers questions that are about their children emotional regulation ability (See appendix 1 for a snapshot of the questionnaire). There are 3 questions in part 1, 58 in part 2 and 21 in part 3. Parents rates themselves and their children with a scale of '1' to '4', '1' means strongly disagree while '4' means strongly agree. The mark is calculated according to their responses but some questions have reverse marking. Finally, every respondent is asked whether they are willing to participate in the second part of the research, which is interview.

Parents rated themselves through the online questionnaire, one participant belonged to one of the three parenting styles because these are the most common used practices. Although parents may not be rated exactly the certain style of parenting, the result from the questionnaire can reflect which style was the parents tend to be. They also needed to rate their child's emotional regulation. Parents completed the questionnaire according to their child daily performance with no bias. The results of different children reared by different households were expected to be different from each other because their living environment that may influence them may not be the same.

***Interview.*** I conducted semi-structured interviews with 3 parents who had different parenting styles in order to further investigate parents' attitude and behaviour towards their children's emotion. In the interview, parents were provided situations and asked to describe their parenting styles that they had adopted and also to provide examples showing their child regulating their emotions. During the interview, I asked the parents to elaborate their answers or to provide further examples to support their responses. 14 compulsory questions were asked and some further questions were also asked in order to have more details (see appendix 2). The interview was recorded, and subsequently transcribed into written Chinese.



### **5.3. Data collection procedure**

The researcher sent the consent form together with the online questionnaire link to the target parents through the Internet. Parents were suggested to complete the questionnaire within a week by submitting the online questionnaire. After the quantitative data collection period, the researcher tidied up the data by using Microsoft Excel and calculated the marks of each respondent to categorise their parenting styles and their children's emotional regulation ability. After overviewed the results from the quantitative research, 3 parents that were practicing in different parenting styles were invited to have interview. The researcher has done the voice recording.

### **5.4. Data analysis**

The data of this research was analysed to investigate the relationship between the 3 parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability. The results from the part of parenting styles and children's emotional regulation performance were presented in table by the 3 parenting style categories (authoritative, authoritarian and permissive) and children's scores on emotional regulation ability. The relationships among the two variables were presented in scattered graph.

For the qualitative data, as the researcher has done the voice recording in the interview, she replayed the recording and transcribed it into written Chinese so that the wordings for analyse were more accurate. Finally, the researcher went through the transcription and highlighted some keywords and sentences. The phrases were categorised in responsiveness and demandingness by using table. It was used to support the results of the research.

## **6. Result**

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between parenting styles and the emotional regulation ability of children who aged 3 to 6. The following results addressed the research questions as mentioned in previous part.

### **6.1. Characteristics of demographic**

In the quantitative research, there were 76 Hong Kong parents completed the online questionnaire. The participants consisted of 59 females (78%) and 17 males (22%) (see table 1 and figure 1). Regarding to the age of the respondents, 52 of them were 31 to 40 years old (68%), 14 of them were 18 to 30 years old (18%), 41 to 50 years old and over 51 years old had the lowest number of people, which were 8 (11%) and 2 respondents (3%) respectively (see

figure 2).

In terms of living district, the numbers of respondent lived in the New Territories and Kowloon were similar, there were 27 (36%) and 23 respondents (30%) respectively. Then, 17 respondents (22%) lived on the Hong Kong Island while 9 respondents (12%) lived in the Island District (see figure 3).

For the qualitative research, one respondent from each parenting style was recruited to have interview, there were total of 3 parents. All of them were mother from the families.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N=76</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Female</i>	59	78%
<i>Male</i>	17	22%
<b>Age group</b>		
<i>18-30</i>	14	18%
<i>31-40</i>	52	68%
<i>41-50</i>	8	11%
<i>≥ 51</i>	2	3%
<b>Living district</b>		
<i>New Territories</i>	27	36%
<i>Kowloon</i>	23	30%
<i>Hong Kong Island</i>	17	22%
<i>Island District</i>	9	12%

Table 1: Characteristic of demographic

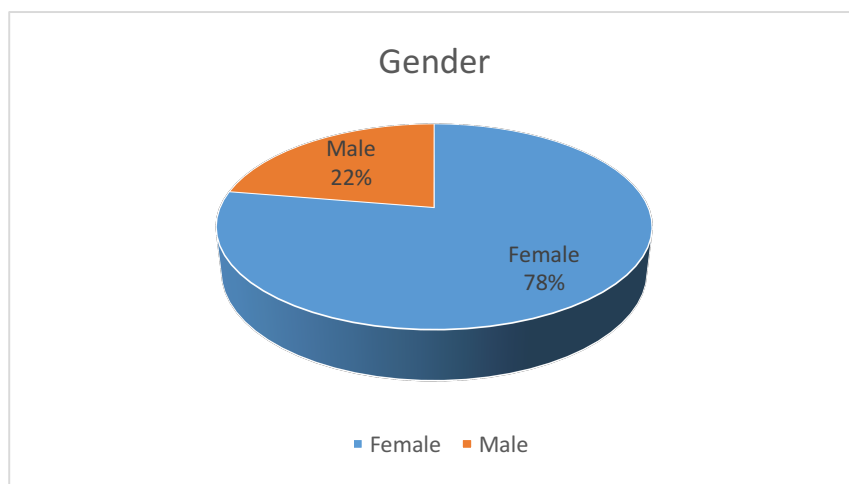


Figure 1: Proportion of respondents' gender

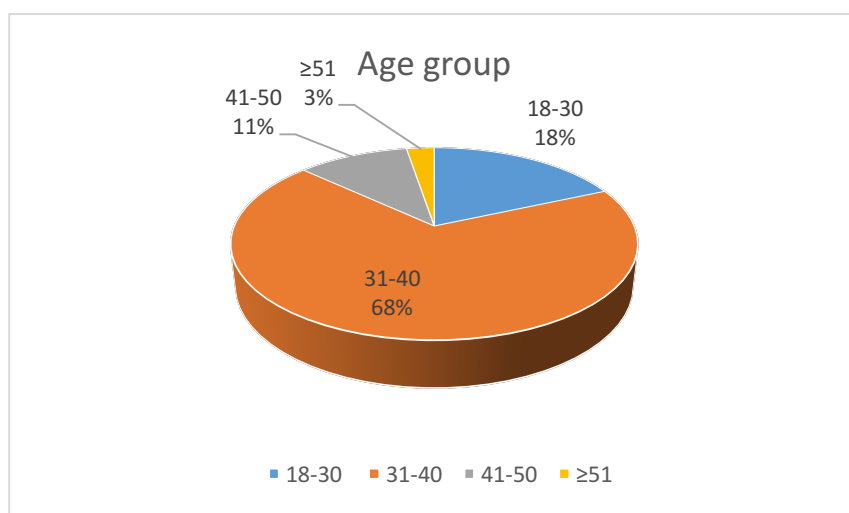


Figure 2: Proportion of respondents' age group

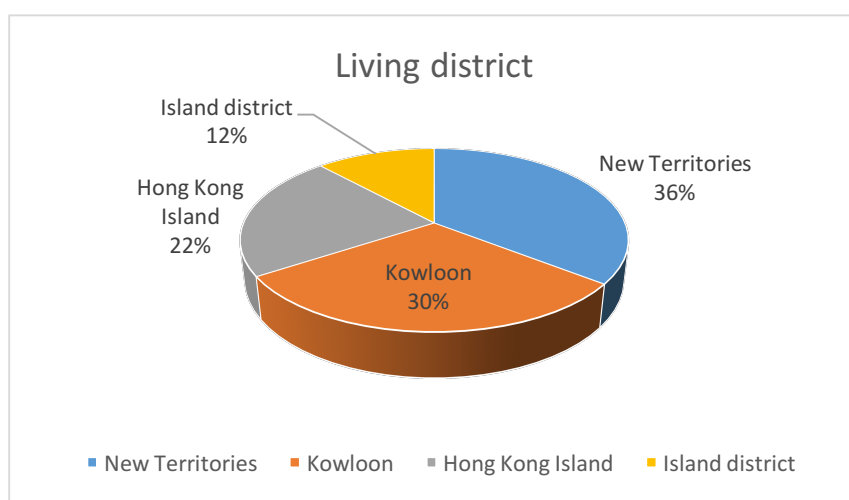


Figure 3: Proportion of respondents' living district

## 6.2. Parents' parenting styles

According to the result from the quantitative research, parents adopted different types of parenting styles and most of them tended to practice authoritative parenting. Parents rated themselves through the online questionnaires, they had one mean scores on each parenting style, the highest mean score represented that they tended to practice that parenting style because they were mostly agreed with the statement in that category. As shown in the data (see table 2), authoritative parenting was the most popular parenting style among all respondents, there were 44 of them (58%, M=2.91) got the highest mean score in authoritative parenting, followed by authoritarian and permissive, with 18 (24%, M=2.54) and 14 respondents (18%, M=2.40) (see figure 4).

Parenting styles	N=76	M=4
Authoritative	44	2.91
Authoritarian	18	2.54
Permissive	14	2.40

Table 2: No. of respondent in each parenting style

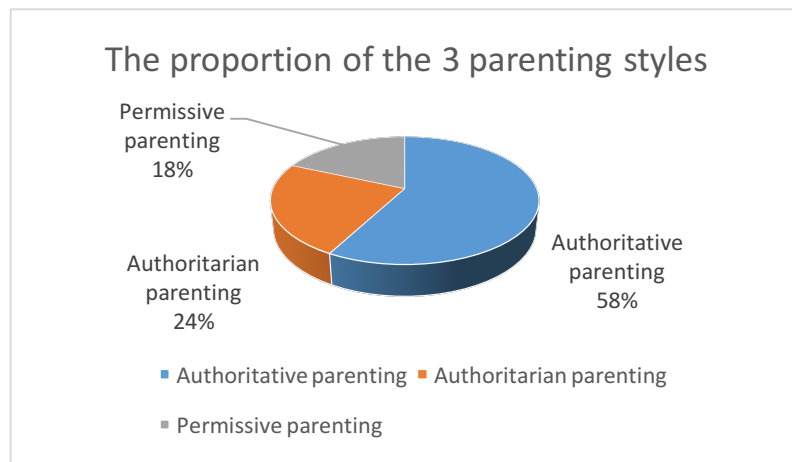


Figure 4: Proportion of the 3 parenting styles

On the other hand, 3 respondents were recruited to have an interview to describe their practice in detail and with examples to see whether they were really adopting that parenting style. From the interview, parents described themselves correspondingly in the quantitative and qualitative research with different phrases (see table 3). Regarding to the authoritative parent, she illustrated a certain level of responsiveness and demandingness. She showed her care and love by recognising her daughter's feeling ('seems very pain') and using reciprocal words to show that she cared about her thoughts ('ask', 'discuss'). Nevertheless, in terms of demandingness, she used mild words to require her child to do something with explanation ('remind', 'how' and 'reason'). When her daughter did not meet her requirements, she did not shout or scold at her (see appendix 3). The above result showed her practice were aligned with the quantitative result.

For the authoritarian parent, she showed a low level of responsiveness but high level in demandingness. Although she used words which represented care ('comfort'), her response to her son was little. She said that when he talked about something, she usually just nods her head or stays quiet, but not to ask further questions. Moreover, she demanded her son to do thing by using strong 1-way words. For instance, 'tell'. If he did not satisfy her requirements, she would probably stop or scold at him (see appendix 4).

Turn to the permissive parent, she illustrated much care and love but only little or even no demand on her son in the interview. She showed her high responsiveness by saying words like 'praise' and 'hug'. When he wanted something, she said that she would give him to amuse him even he did something wrong. However, from the example given by the parent, although she warned him after he faulted, she gave final chance to him repeatedly instead of giving punishment as she said before. Meanwhile, the level of demandingness was certainly low.

When the parent was asked about the expectation or requirements on her son, she showed very relax and answered that she expected nothing special because she could not decide anything for her son (see appendix 5). It showed that she was practicing permissive parenting, which was the same with the quantitative result.

	Phrases used in the interview	
Parenting styles	Responsiveness	Demandingness
<b>Authoritative parenting</b>	comfort, chat, seems very pain, play together, ask, discuss	discuss, ask, remind, say, how, reason, do not scold
<b>Authoritarian parenting</b>	comfort, discuss, nod the head, quiet, see	discuss, tell, ask, stop, scold, cannot, disappointed
<b>Permissive parenting</b>	praise, hug, give, buy again, to amuse	final chance, punish, nothing special, cannot decide

Table 3: Phrases used by interviewees to describe their parenting practice

### 6.3. Children's emotional regulation ability

Parents also rated their children's emotional regulation ability. The score of each question in this part is summed up. The higher the score they got, the higher the emotional regulation ability they had. From the quantitative result, children's emotional regulation ability varied in a large range, which is from 42 to 74. They averagely gained 53.59 out of 84. The overall performance of their emotional regulation ability was ordered and represented in a table below (see table 4).

Generally, children performed the best was 'changes from being upset to feeling much better within a few minutes' ( $M=3.01$ ), whilst they had the worst performance in the item of 'is able to resist laughing when it isn't appropriate' ( $M=2.04$ ). Furthermore, their emotional regulation



ability in anger was not good at all because in the 5 items of the lowest mean score, there were 3 items were about anger.

Question No.	Items	M=4
7	Changes from being upset to feeling much better within a few minutes.	3.01
8	Has difficulty waiting in line for something.	2.86
14	Is easy to soothe when (he)(she)is upset.	2.86
10	Has trouble sitting still when (he)(she) is told to.	2.75
18	Rarely cries for more than a couple of minutes at a time.	2.75
16	Is very difficult to soothe when (he)(she) has become upset.	2.74
4	When angry about something, (he)(she) tends to stay upset for ten minutes or longer.	2.68
17	Easily gets irritated when (he)(she) has trouble with some task (e.g. building, drawing, dressing)	2.68
1	Calms down quickly following an exciting event.	2.61
3	Has a hard time settling down after an exciting activity.	2.61
13	Is likely to cry when even a little bit hurt.	2.58
12	Becomes easily frustrated when tired.	2.51
9	Becomes tearful when told to do something (he)(she) does not want to do.	2.45
6	Gets angry when (he)(she) can't find something (he)(she)wants to play with.	2.43
15	Rarely becomes discouraged when (he)(she) has trouble making something work.	2.43
2	Has temper tantrums when (he)(she)doesn't get what (he)(she) wants.	2.42
21	Has a hard time concentrating on an activity when there are distracting noises.	2.38
5	Gets mad when even mildly criticized.	2.34
19	Gets angry when called in from play before (he)(she) is ready to quit.	2.33

<b>20</b>	Gets mad when provoked by other children.	2.25
<b>11</b>	Is able to resist laughing or smiling when it isn't appropriate.	2.04

Table 4: Children's mean score of emotional regulation ability questionnaire

The interviewees were also asked to describe their children's performance on emotional regulation ability by providing some concrete examples. The phrases used were presented in the table below (table 5). For the child under authoritative parenting, who scored the highest among children of interviewees, her parent said that she did not lose temper from time to time but show restraint. Even she was angry, she would not push over anything, she was able to calm herself in a while. She laughed when she was happy.

On the other hand, the child in authoritarian household was also described by his parent that it was difficult for him to control his emotion in a short period of time, i.e. 10 minutes. For example, he stayed in a bad mood or cried for a long time. When he was excited or upset, he needed a long time to calm himself.

Meanwhile, the child in permissive family, his parent responded that he did not willingly stop from doing something from time to time. If he was stopped by someone, he would show some

negative expression or even vent by grabbing something or shouting at somebody. On the contrast, when he felt happy, he would laugh loudly.

Parenting styles	Phrases used in the interview by parents
<b>Authoritative parenting</b>	not always loose temper, shows restraint, will not push over anything, calm herself in a while, laugh
<b>Authoritarian parenting</b>	in a bad mood for a long time, cry for a long time, excitedly, upset, 10 minutes, difficult to calm himself
<b>Permissive parenting</b>	not willing to stop, bad face expression, loose temper, grab, shout, vent, always laugh loudly

Table 5: Phrases used by interviewees to describe children's emotional regulation

#### 6.4. Relationship between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability

Relationships were found between the 3 parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability. The one-way ANOVA between subjects was conducted to compare the effect of the three parenting styles on children's emotional regulation ability. There was a significant effect of 3 parenting styles on children's emotional regulation ability that the p-value level for the 3 parenting styles were under 0.05 ( $F(2, 73) = 30.27, p < .05$ ). In addition, a Tukey post hoc test revealed that the children under authoritative parenting styles had the best scores ( $57.09 \pm 6.47, p < .05$ ), compared to children under permissive parenting ( $52.53 \pm 2.67, p < .05$ ), and children

under authoritarian parenting ( $45.47 \pm 2.79$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The above results suggested that parenting styles have an effect on children's emotional regulation ability. Specifically, parents adopting authoritative parenting caused children to have higher ability in controlling emotion, while authoritarian parenting influence children to be less capable in regulating emotion.

In addition, the results revealed different relationships between parenting styles and children emotional regulation ability. It is found that authoritative parenting and permissive parenting had a positive relationship with children's emotional regulation ability. As the figure shown, the higher mean score they had on authoritative parenting, the higher emotional regulation score their child gained (see figure 5). Similarly, permissive parenting style also had a positive relationship with children's emotional regulation ability (see figure 6).

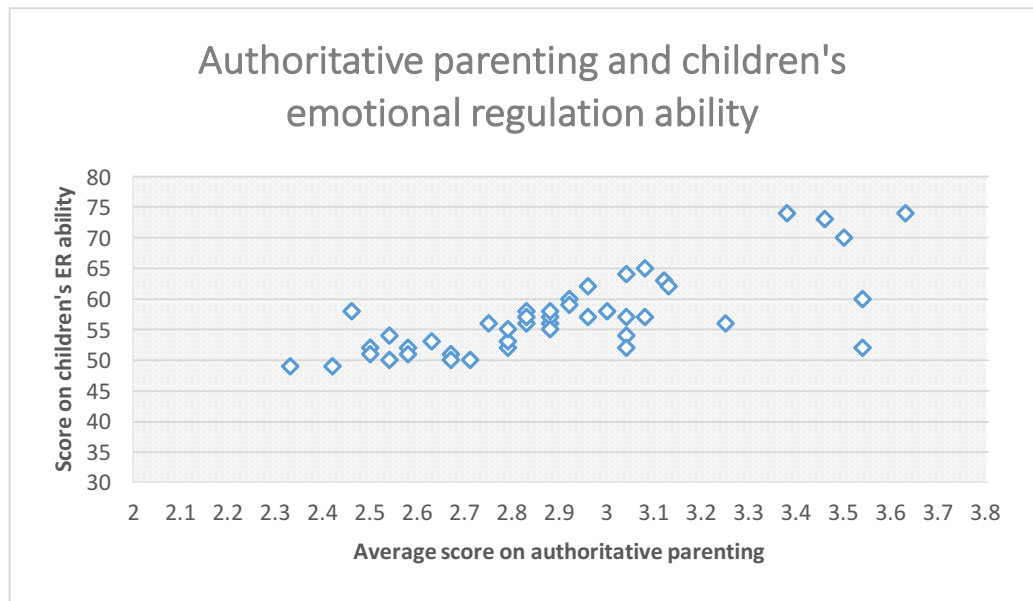


Figure 5: Positive relationship between authoritative parenting and children's emotional regulation ability

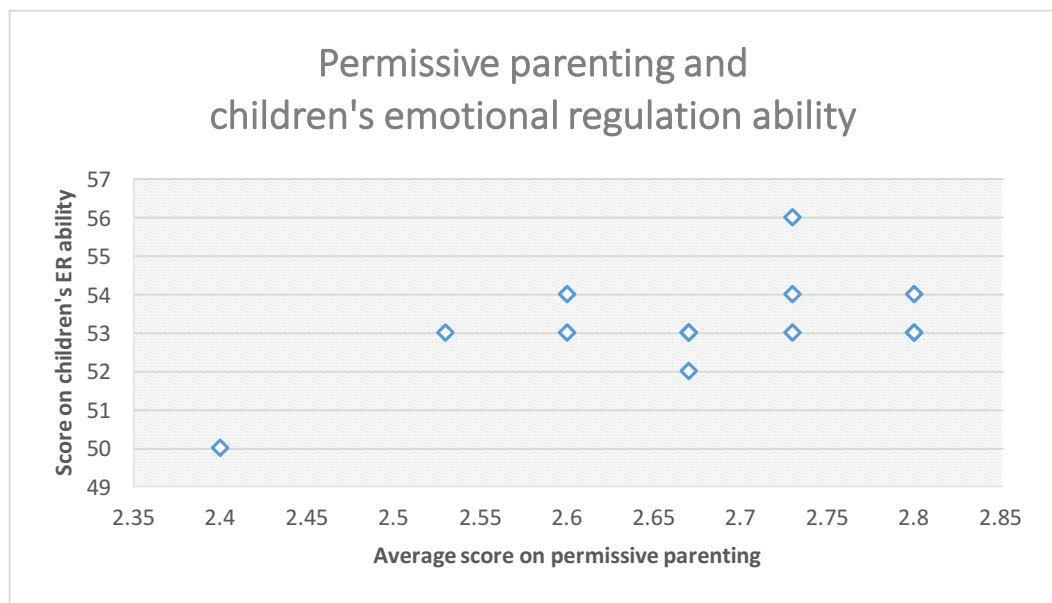


Figure 6: Positive relationship between permissive parenting and children's emotional regulation ability

Conversely, authoritarian parenting was negatively related to children's emotional regulation ability. The quantitative results given that the higher mean score on authoritarian parenting style the parents had, the lower score the children had in emotional regulation (see figure 7).

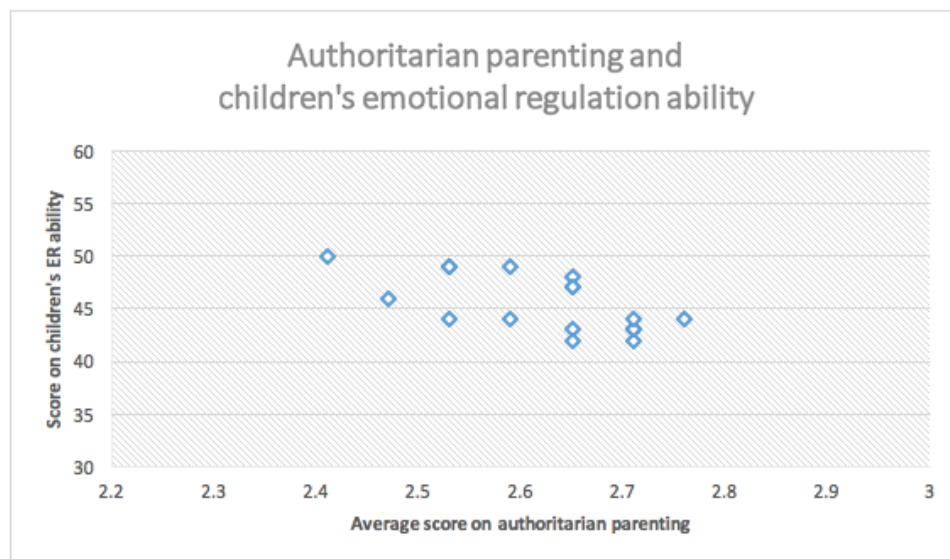


Figure 7: Negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and children's emotional regulation ability

Besides, there were some other findings from the quantitative results about the relationship of parenting styles and children's ability on emotional regulation. First of all, it was noted that children lived in permissive family were generally weaker to regulate their emotion when they were not satisfied, such as asked to stop from doing something or did not get what they wanted. There were 4 items about the emotional reaction of children under unsatisfactory situation, children under permissive parenting gained the lowest score in these 4 items, including Q2, Q5,

Q6 and Q19 (see appendix 1), compared to the other two parenting styles. The range of total score in these items gained by children reared by permissive parents was 6 to 9 ( $M=7.79$ ), whereas 8 to 16 for authoritative parenting ( $M=10.41$ ) and 7 to 10 for authoritarian parenting ( $M=8.33$ ). Parents who rated themselves higher in permissive parenting, their children got lowest score on emotional regulation under the unsatisfactory situation even their total score was higher than children in authoritarian family. From the graph, it showed that children in permissive household perform the worst in unsatisfactory situation, followed by authoritative and authoritarian parenting (see figure 8).

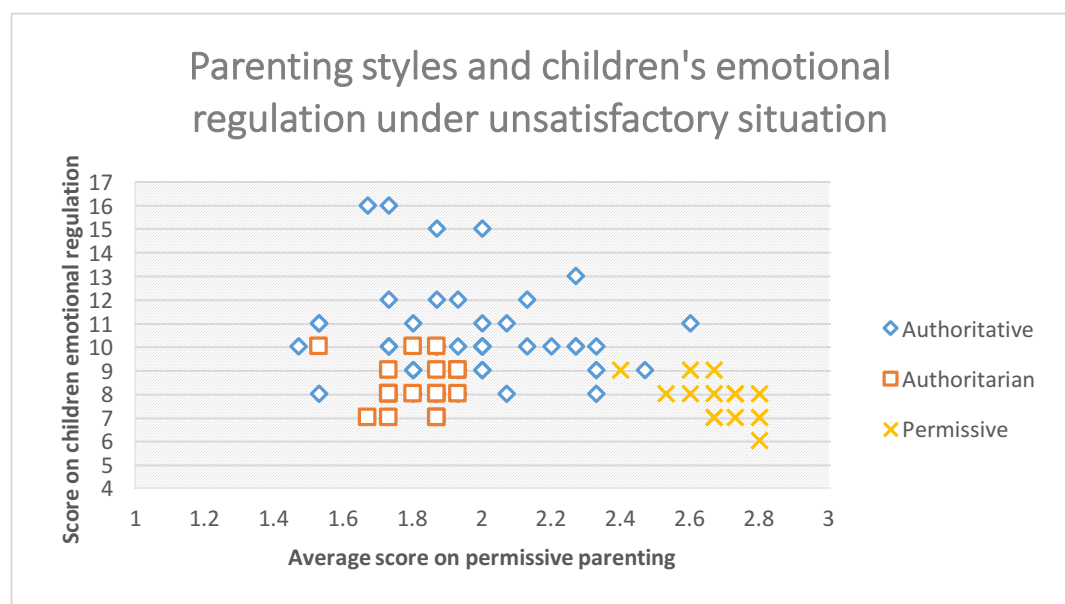


Figure 8: Comparison of parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability under unsatisfactory situation

Secondly, the quantitative results also suggested that children who had authoritarian parents needed longer time to regulate their emotion. There were 6 items were about controlling emotion over a time period, including Q1, Q3, Q4, Q7, Q13 and Q18 (see appendix 1). Children lived in authoritarian parenting scored the lowest generally among children under 3 parenting styles. The total score range of children under authoritarian parenting was from 10 to 15 (M=13.11), while authoritative parenting was from 14 to 21 (M=17.5) and permissive parenting was from 14 to 18 (M=16.26). It is also found that the higher the average score the parents had on authoritarian parenting, the lower score the children had on emotional regulation over a time period, which means they were less able in controlling their emotion within a duration (see figure 9).

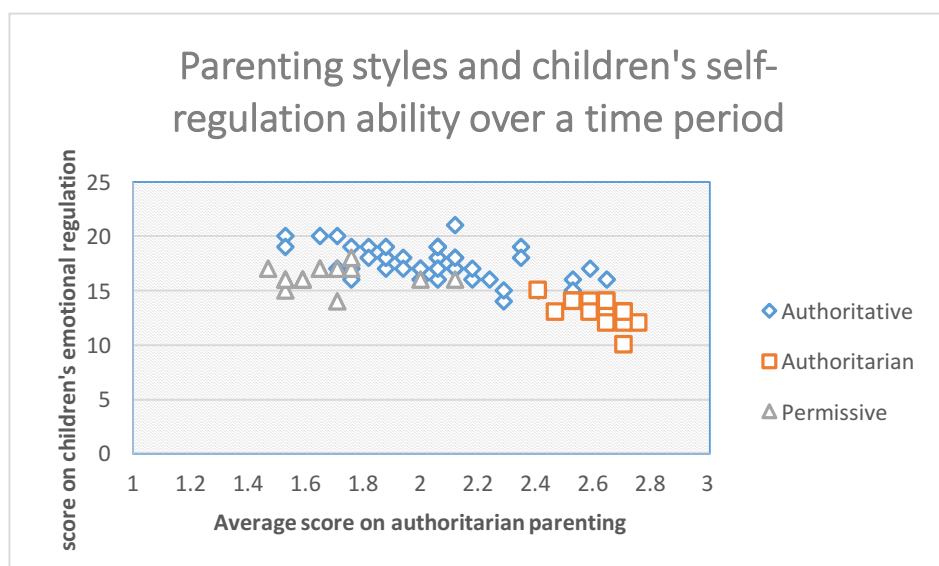


Figure 9: Comparison of parenting styles and children ability of regulating emotion over a time period



## **7. Discussion**

### **7.1. Parents' responsiveness and demandingness**

It was hypothesized that parents would show and describe themselves in different levels of responsiveness and demandingness, the results showed that the most frequent used parenting style is authoritative, followed by permissive and authoritarian. Parents who were adopting different parenting styles presented different levels in responsiveness and demandingness, which was consistent with the previous researches and same as the hypothesis. For the authoritative parents, they showed a balanced level of responsiveness and demandingness in both quantitative and qualitative research. They did not only show a reasonable care and love by comforting them when they had negative emotion, but also carry out 2-way communication with their children through discussion and asking for their opinions and they required their children reasonably and gave explanation at the same time. Besides, authoritarian parents from the research provided little care but high demand on children. They built a 1-way relationship with children which was usually directed by parents. On the contrast, permissive parents gave lots of love but had a low expectation on their children. They tended to do things that amuse children but they seldom believed that that had the authority to expect something from children.

## **7.2. Children's emotional regulation ability**

It was hypothesized that the children had higher ability in responding socially acceptable and delay reaction would have higher emotional regulation ability. Children was rated or even described by their parents according to their daily performance, the results supported the hypothesis and were congruent with literature. Children who were more able to have positive expressing strategies and resist from expressing immediately got higher total score in the emotional regulation ability questionnaire. Additionally, older children had higher emotional regulation score than younger children generally. As mentioned by the literature, children develop their emotional regulation skills at age 2 to 5, older children may have more self-regulation skills than others, for example, leaving the stimulation, self-talking and soothing. It was because they may have more experience in dealing with different emotion under various situations (Family Health Service, 2017; Gilliom, Shaw, Beck, Schonberg and Lukon, 2002). Therefore, they were more capable in regulating emotion when this research was carrying out.

### **7.3. Relationship between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability**

It was hypothesized that there is relationship between the 3 parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability. To be specific, the authoritative and permissive parenting were positively related with the children's emotional regulation ability, whilst a negative relationship was found between authoritarian parenting and children's emotional regulation ability. The results supported the hypothesis although partly of it was not consistent with the literature. Both of the literature and results illustrated that there was a significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and children's emotional regulation ability since children under high control did not have enough chance to learn to deal with various emotion, their emotion expression was higher controlled by the authoritarian parents. However, regarding to the authoritative and permissive parenting, mixed findings were found. It was suggested that there were positive relationships in either authoritative or permissive parenting with children's emotional regulation ability, but some literature found that there was no specific relationship. It was different from the results that there was a significant relationship among them. Other factors may account for this situation. Firstly, the background was different. The research of the literature was carried out in western countries, the cultures of western and eastern were not

the same, it is possible to affect young children's growing environment. According to the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System theory, social culture is one of the factors that affect young children's development, including emotional regulation ability, so parenting styles were not the only factor that influence children's emotional regulation ability. Therefore, the culture of the countries may lead to the difference between the literature and the results of this research. Secondly, parents may have different explanation of the questions. Since parents completed the questionnaire without any supervision, they answered the questions with their knowledge and understanding. Different understandings may cause different results from this research and the previous research.

#### **7.4. Parenting styles and children's emotional regulation in unsatisfactory situation**

The result of children's emotional regulation ability in permissive parenting was not congruent with the literature too. From the literature, it was stated that children in the permissive family had higher ability in emotional display because permissive parents accept more on how children express their emotion, which helped them develop positive strategies to cope with different emotions. Nevertheless, it was partly consistent with the results. Although children in permissive family had higher emotional regulation ability generally, they were specifically weak in expressing themselves when they were not

satisfied, their total score on this aspect was the lowest among all children. The way that how permissive parents treated their children may be a reason of this result. Since permissive parents always wants to amuse their children, they are willing to give everything to them so as to make children happy and like them. Therefore, children are satisfied by their parents all the time. There are few chances for them to learn how to express themselves when they cannot get what they want. Therefore, whenever they are not satisfied, they are not able to express emotion in a socially acceptable way. The above situation caused lower score of children in permissive family.

### **7.5. Parenting styles and the time period of children's emotional regulation**

The literature showed only a part of emotional regulation ability of children in authoritarian household. According to the literature, children in authoritarian family suppressed their feelings. However, the results represented that these children had difficulty in regulating their emotion under a time period. It may be true that children liked to suppress their feelings because they were always controlled by their parents, they did not have enough chance to understand and regulate emotion by themselves (Farrell, 2015). Inversely, when children under authoritarian practice showed their emotion, they needed longer time to regulate their emotion, regardless of positive or negative emotions. Since children in this type of family did not experience much and know the way in regulating emotion. Also, as parents were

always highly control them, it was not beneficial to help children to build up positive emotional regulation strategies. Therefore, longer time was needed for them to calm down.

## **8. Recommendations**

Evidence has shown that different parenting styles put different effects of young children's regulation ability. There are few recommendations to improve young children's emotional regulation ability.

### **8.1. Show balanced level of responsiveness and demandingness to children**

Parents are suggested to show a certain level of love and care and have reasonable expectation on children with explanation. Giving love and care to children makes them feel that they are accepted by parents, so they are more willing to express their feelings to parents and avoid them from suppressing their feelings. On the other hand, it is important to have expectation on children. A reasonable expectation with explanation helps children understand the limits and rules, which guide them to the socially acceptable behaviour and develop related coping strategies.

## **8.2. Provide emotional expression opportunities for children**

After helping children understand the social norms, it is crucial for parents to give space to children to practice their emotional regulation skills. Children face different situation in their daily life which lead to a variety of emotions. Since children learn through doing (Entwistle, 2012), when space is provided, children have chance to practice their emotional expression and regulation skills to develop strategies to deal with different emotions.

## **8.3. Give instruction on emotional regulation to children**

It is good for parents to provide guidance and feedback after children expressed their emotion. Children gain experience in practice emotional regulation skills under different situations. However, the strategies developed by themselves may not always positive or correct. They need parents' assistance to develop positive emotional regulation skills. After children expressed their emotion, parents should give feedbacks to children no matter they performed positively or negatively. If it is a positive strategy, parents are good to give positive reinforcements, for instance, praising them. On the contrary, if it is not a suitable emotional expression way, it is necessary for parents to tell them immediately and provide instruction to coach them to develop positive strategies. It is also good for parents to discuss with their

children in order to help children develop emotional regulation skills independently (Berg, 2011).

## **9. Limitation of the research**

In considering the limitation of the research, there are some limitations should be mentioned.

Firstly, the sampling group size is small. There were 76 respondents and 3 interviewees participated in the research. The area that did not covered by the results may not be able to be significant enough to conclude the overall relationship between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation.

Secondly, parents' understandings and openness on the questionnaire may affect the results.

The questionnaire depended on parents' views on their parenting practices and their children's general performance on emotional regulation. Additionally, although parents may not agree with some statements, they may not be willing to report some of their parenting practices and children's temperaments. The above limitations may influence the accuracy of the research.

Thirdly, the culture may affect the results of the research. Since this research was carried in Hong Kong, which is surrounded by eastern culture, the results may be only applicable in other



places with eastern culture. Whether it is the same in western countries, further research is needed.

## **10. Conclusion**

To be concluded, parents were applying different parenting styles. The most frequently used by respondents was authoritative parenting, followed by authoritarian and permissive parenting. On the other hand, children with higher ability in responding socially acceptable and having delay reaction had higher score in emotional regulation ability. Last but not least, it was found that parenting style is a significant factor in affecting children's emotional regulation ability. Parents who retained a balanced level of care and expectation on children led children to have a better emotional regulation ability. Regarding to permissive parenting, although there was a similar pattern with authoritative parenting, children in permissive household had difficulty in regulating emotion when they were not satisfied. For authoritarian parenting, parents who adopted this parenting styles had a child with weaker ability in regulating emotion in a period of time. As a result, it is good for parents to provide enough love and care to children and set reasonable requirements with explanation on children. It is also important to give emotional regulation practice opportunities, feedback and instruction so that children are able to develop positive

emotional regulation abilities that match social values and norms. However, due to several limitations in the research, further research is needed to conclude a more significant relationship between parenting styles and children's emotional regulation ability.

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## 12. Appendix

### 12.1. Appendix 1: Questionnaires sample

#### 家長的管教方式如何影響幼兒的情緒自控能力？

##### 問卷調查

你好，本人是香港教育大學幼兒教育榮譽學士五年級學生。本人正進行由黃國成博士負責監督的畢業論文研究。本人希望透過是次研究，瞭解家長的管教方式與三至六歲幼兒的情緒自控能力的關係。此問卷內的資料只會作是次研究之用，不會公開，請放心填寫，感謝閣下的參與。

請在適當空格填上「✓」。

例：

	非常同意	同意	不同意	非常不同意
1. 我的子女喜愛學習。	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

##### 基本資料

1. 性別 男 ☐ 女 ☐
2. 年齡 18-30 歲 ☐ 31-40 歲 ☐ 40-50 歲 ☐ 51 歲或以上 ☐
3. 你住在哪一區？ 新界 ☐ 九龍 ☐ 港島 ☐ 離島 ☐

##### 第一部分 — 家長的管教方式

	非常同意	同意	不同意	非常不同意
1. 我知道子女的朋友的名字	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. 我關心子女在學校遇到的問題	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. 當子女做得好時，我會讚賞子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. 當子女感到傷心時，我會表示明白和安慰子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. 我會擁抱、親吻和握着子女來表示我對子女的喜愛	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	非常同意	同意	不同意	非常不同意
6. 我會回應子女的情感和需要	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. 我鼓勵子女說出自己的煩惱	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. 我和子女有親密而溫馨的時間	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. 當我在教導子女出錯時，我會向子女道歉	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. 我會向子女解釋他的行為的後果	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. 我會向子女解釋遵守規則的原因	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. 我會強調規則的原因	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. 我會透過鼓勵子女說出自己行為的後果，來幫助子女明白行為的影響	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. 我會向子女解釋我對於他的好行為及壞行為的感受	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. 我會和子女討論及解釋行為不當的原因	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. 在子女參與活動前，我會告訴子女我對他的行為的期望	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. 在進行家庭計劃時，我會考慮子女的意願	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. 我容許子女參與訂立家庭的規則	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. 在要求子女做事前，我會考慮子女的意願	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. 當子女不同意父母時，我鼓勵子女勇於表達自己	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. 我把子女的行為不當視為可以接受	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. 我與子女的相處是隨和及輕鬆的	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. 我表現對子女有耐性	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. 我會與子女開玩笑和玩耍	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	非常同意	同意	不同意	非常不同意
25. 我對子女爆發我的憤怒	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. 當子女行為不當時，我會向子女大叫或喊叫	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. 我會與子女吵架	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. 我不同意子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. 我會使用體罰作為管教子女的一種方式	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. 當子女不服從時，我會打子女屁股	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. 當子女行為不當時，我會掌摑子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. 當子女不服從時，我會抓着子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. 我會以懲罰來指導子女，而不是解釋原因	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. 當子女不服從時，我會推子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. 我會取走子女的特權來懲罰子女，但給予很少解釋	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. 我會把子女單獨留在一個地方來懲罰子女，但給予很少解釋	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. 我會在很少或沒有理由的情況下，以威脅來懲罰子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. 當子女打架時，我會先懲罰子女，然後再問問題	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. 我關心自己的感受多於子女的感受	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. 當子女提問要他順從的原因時，我會以「因為我說的」、「因為我是你的父母」、「我想你這樣做」等類似的話語向子女解釋	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. 我會告訴子女要做什麼	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. 我會要求子女做事	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	非常同意	同意	不同意	非常不同意
43. 當子女的行為不符合我的預期時，我會責罵和批評子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. 我會說明懲罰，但實際上不會做	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. 我以懲罰來威脅子女多於給予懲罰	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. 我溺愛子女	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. 當子女對某事物喧鬧時，我會給予他/她想要的	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48. 我會在子女行為不當後給予訓導	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. 以獎勵來引誘子女服從	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. 我允許子女中斷他人	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51. 我允許子女騷擾他人	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
52. 我對子女的不當行為視而不見	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53. 即使子女的行為違背我的意願，我也不會作出批評和責罵	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
54. 我對我的管教能力感到有自信	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55. 我不太肯定應如何解決子女的不當行為	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
56. 我對管教子女感到有困難	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
57. 我能為子女訂立嚴格而完善的規則	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
58. 在我管教子女的不當行為時，我害怕子女會不喜歡自己的父母	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



15. 當不能順利完成工作時，很少會感到氣餒	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. 感到不安或傷心時難以撫慰	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. 當遇到某些任務時（如：穿衣、繪畫），很容易受刺激	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. 甚少哭上幾分鐘或更長的時間	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. 被告知要離開遊戲活動時，會感到生氣	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. 在被其他孩子激怒時會生氣	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. 當有分散專注力的聲音時，很難專注於某項活動	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

—問卷完，感謝參與—

如有意參加訪談，請填上聯絡資料以便聯絡，所有資料只供聯絡訪談之用，不會公開，在研究完結後，所有資料將會被銷毀。

本人 ☐ 同意 ☐ 不同意 參與訪談。

姓名：\_\_\_\_\_

聯絡電話：\_\_\_\_\_

電子郵箱：\_\_\_\_\_

## 12.2. Appendix 2: Interview questions sample

1. 小孩的性別是？
2. 他/她多少歲？
3. 可以說說小朋友的性格嗎？
4. 你平時和小朋友是怎樣相處？你會和小朋友進行什麼活動？
5. 他/她多久會主動和你聊天嗎？你們一天會用多少時間聊天？
6. 可以說說你們聊天的內容嗎？大概是關於什麼？你會怎樣回應他？
7. 小朋友和朋輩是怎樣相處？你的小朋友會和其他小朋友進行什麼活動？
8. 你對小朋友有什麼期望？如學業、將來、情意發展上。
9. 如果小朋友做了一些與你理想不符的事時，你會怎樣？
10. 現實生活中，當他/她有正面情緒時，如開心和興奮，他/她會怎樣去表達自己的情緒？例如？
11. 你會怎樣回應他/她這些情緒？
12. 現實生活中，當他/她有負面情緒時，如生氣和傷心，他/她會怎樣去表達自己的情緒？例如？
13. 你會怎樣回應他/她這些情緒？
14. 假如小朋友未能控制自己的情緒，你會怎樣協助他/她？