

# 'Overparenting' trend worries psychologists

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QUT PhD researcher Judith Locke says parents have to let children face life's challenges, the good and bad. Credit: Helene Souza

(Medical Xpress)—School psychologists and counsellors are concerned that overbearing parents are raising children unable to cope with failure and life outside of home, a new QUT study shows.

A survey of nearly 130 parenting professionals across Australia found 27 per cent had seen 'many' instances of overparenting while almost 65 per cent reported having witnessed 'some' incidents.

Only 8 per cent of psychologists and counsellors surveyed reported no incidents of overparenting.

QUT PhD researcher Judith Locke, a [clinical psychologist](#) and former teacher, said although 'helicopter' and 'lawnmower' parents were popular colloquial terms, her study proved that professionals recognised it was a problem.

"Parents are typically doing the best job they can do and this type of parenting is done with the best of intentions and out of love," she said.

"However, more effort doesn't necessarily produce a better child. There may be a point at which effort can become harmful."

Examples of excessive parenting cited in the study included a parent cutting up a 10-year-old's food, forbidding a 17-year-old to catch a train to school or confronting other parents about why their child was not invited to a [classmate](#)'s birthday party.

Ms Locke said 'overparenting' could be classed into three categories:

- Very high [responsiveness](#): a parent tries to become best friends with the child, thinks their child is always right, or is in constant contact with them;
- Low demands on a child: a parent helps their child avoid an unpleasant life by driving them everywhere or catering to all of their requests, or a parent demands the child's school alters its policies in areas such as discipline to suit their child;
- High demands on a child: a parent places high emphasis on their child's achievements in their school and social life and overschedules the child's time.

"Parenting professionals are concerned overparenting reduces a child's [resilience](#) and life skills because they've never had to face any difficulties," Ms Locke said.

"It could also create a sense of entitlement in children. If they have someone constantly making their life perfect, they expect everybody to make their life perfect for them."

Ms Locke said the paper, which was published in the *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, showed that schools were struggling with the demands of overly enthusiastic parents.

"Experts are saying that the school then becomes responsible for the [child](#) having a charmed life," she said.

"This is having a huge impact on schools. Not only are schools responsible for teaching students, but they have to manage [parents'](#) extreme expectations as well."

Ms Locke said although overparenting had always existed, she believed it was more widespread.

"These days overparenting is virtually perceived as being ideal parenting," she said.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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