

# Chill parents found to make for cool kids

February 28 2024

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A chip of the old block—this old saying takes on new significance in 21st-century Singaporean homes, where research shows that when parents exercise self-control, do not wrestle with economic or financial difficulties, set clear rules and enforce them frequently, use less harsh punishment, and communicate clearly and effectively, their children will

be more mentally empowered and less emotionally stressed under adversity.

The research findings from the Singapore Longitudinal EARly Development Study (SG-LEADS), led by Research Fellow Dr. Chen Luxi and Prof Jean Yeung Wei-Jun from the Human Potential Translational Research Programme at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS Medicine), showed that building a wide array of resources in parents, family, and community before stressful circumstances strike can improve children's resilience and alleviate their emotional symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal during times of adversity.

The research team studied over 2,600 [young children](#) in Singapore across two time periods—Wave One in 2018-2019 before the COVID-19 outbreak and Wave Two in 2021 during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These child participants were aged between 3 and 6 before the COVID-19 outbreak and were tracked until the second year of the pandemic outbreak. There was a noted increase in emotional symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, fear, and withdrawal among the children from pre-pandemic periods to during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the research team measured the primary caregivers' verbal cognitive ability, [self-control](#), economic stress, and parenting strategies, including how much control they set for their children. These primary caregivers also rated the safety and cohesion in their neighborhood.

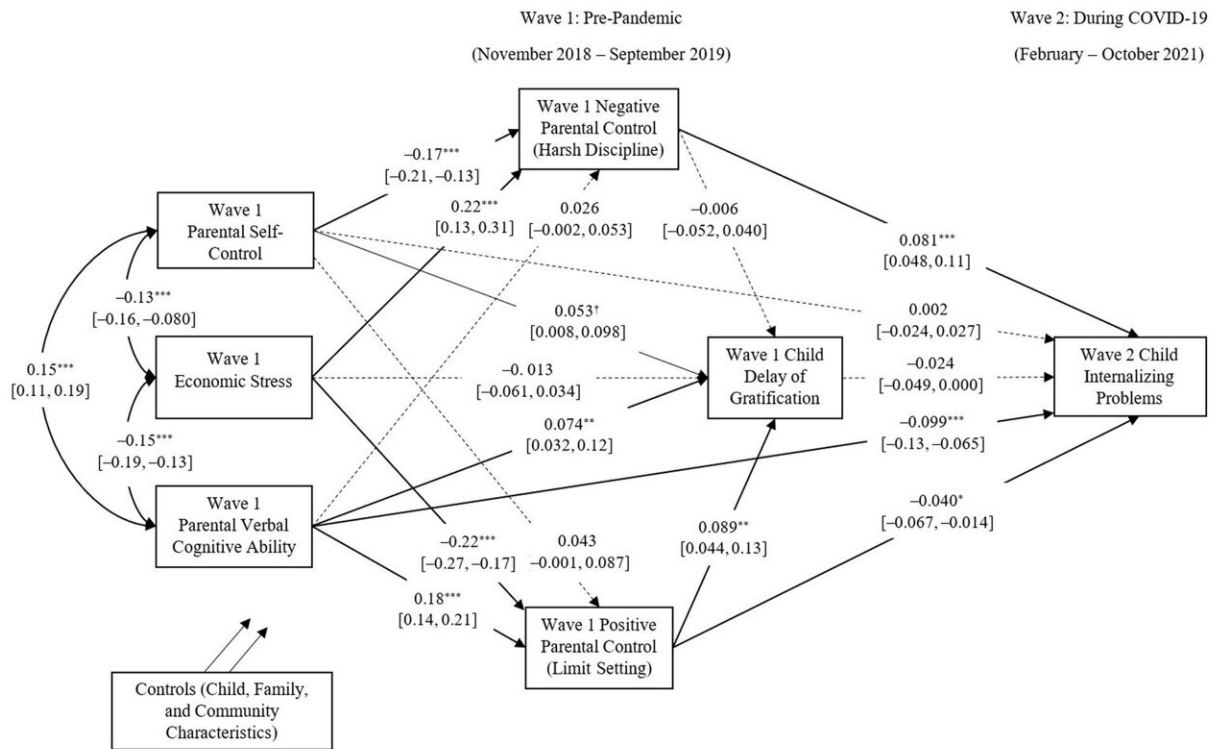
The team then went on to assess the children's self-regulation using the Delay of Gratification (DoG) task, which captures children's ability to inhibit the temptation of smaller immediate rewards in order to get

larger delayed rewards. Three types of rewards, including balloons, stickers, and erasers, were used.

Each child was asked to choose to receive either one reward now or more rewards later after the game which would take about 10 minutes. Children's ability to forgo instant gratification and pursue larger long-term goals is an important aspect of self-regulation. These factors are deemed important resources to shape children's resilience to cope with changing situations.

## **Raising cool kids**

Chen Luxi, Research Fellow from the Human Potential Programme at NUS Medicine, said, "Parents with more advanced verbal cognitive ability, stronger self-control, and lower [economic stress](#) tended to use more functional strategies to interact with their children, such as setting clear rules for children and enforce them with guidance, discussions, and encouragement, rather than using harsh punishment."



Pre-pandemic parental resources predict children’s internalizing problems during the COVID-19 pandemic through parental control. Note: Covariates included child age, gender, ethnicity, parental education, annual household income per capita, parental psychological distress, single parenthood, living with grandparent(s), having a live-in domestic helper(s), and neighborhood quality. Bold lines indicate significant paths, normal lines indicate marginally significant paths, and dotted lines indicate nonsignificant paths. 95% confidence intervals are presented in square brackets.  $***p$

Citation: Chill parents found to make for cool kids (2024, February 28) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-02-chill-parents-cool-kids.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.