



Global Parenting Initiative



Mixed methods feasibility study:

Naungan Kasih parenting program to prevent violence against children in Malaysia



<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-15065-4>

Lachman, J. M., Juhari, R., Stuer, F., Zinser, P., Han, Q., Gardner, F., ... & Landers, C. (2022). "Before I was like a Tarzan. But now, I take a pause": Mixed methods feasibility study of the Naungan Kasih parenting program to prevent violence against children in Malaysia.

Background

Past studies show that harsh parenting is associated with more internalizing and externalizing symptoms among children, with this association appearing stronger in collectivistic Asian societies. Harsh parenting is also linked with child maltreatment. In Malaysia, despite impressive strides in health, social protection, and education, children continue to experience high rates of maltreatment, specifically by parents and caregivers.

Supporting parents with the right knowledge and skills through evidence-based parenting programs has been found to be effective in promoting positive parenting behavior and child outcome. Past research also shows that parenting programs can be impactful and cost-effective strategies in reducing violence against children. Positive parenting initiatives can be a key strategy for violence prevention for three reasons. First, they can prevent violence towards children; second, they may also prevent the early development of violent behavior in children; and third, they may also prevent perpetration and victimisation of violence during adulthood.

The Naungan Kasih Positive Parenting Program ("Naungan Kasih" means "Protection through Love" in Bahasa Melayu) was developed in collaboration with the National Family and Population Development Board (LPPKN) under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysia, UNICEF Malaysia, Maestral International, and Parenting for Lifelong Health.

This study, led by Universiti Putra Malaysia and the University of Oxford, tested the feasibility of the Naungan Kasih program by examining its initial effects on reducing violence against children and associated risk factors.

Research Question

What is the feasibility of a six-session, social learning-based parenting program delivered by government staff in a community setting in reducing violence against children?



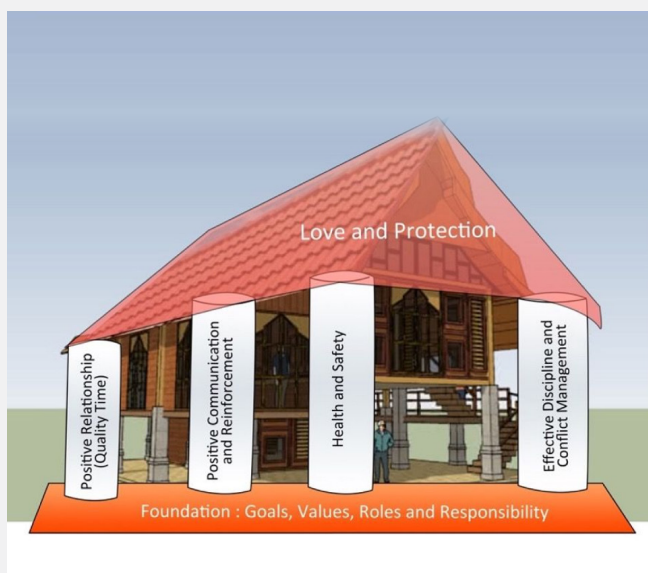
Naungan Kasih Positive Parenting Program

Naungan Kasih is a group-based family strengthening program for families with children ages 0 to 18. The program's goal is to promote child wellbeing by helping parents develop the skills to establish positive relationships with their children while reducing the risk of violence against children at home and in their communities.

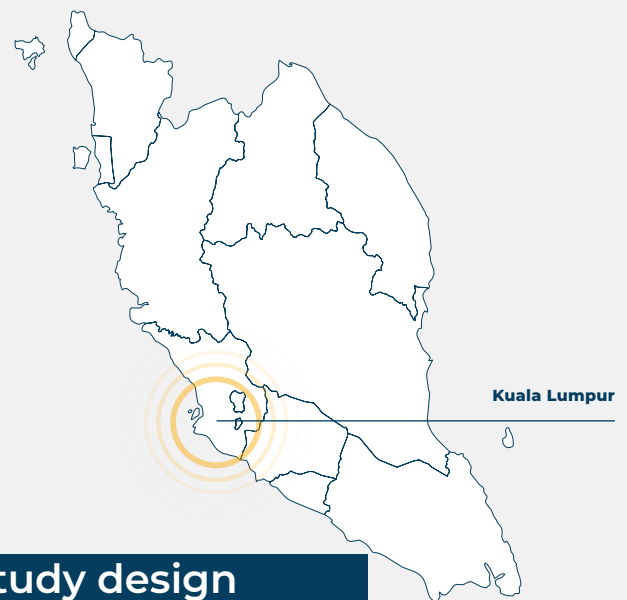
Program content is based on Parenting for Lifelong Health programs and the WHO and UNICEF's Care for Child's Healthy Growth and Development. It has been redesigned for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 18, with participants divided into smaller groups based on the age of their target child (0-23 months, 2-9 years, 10-18 years). Initial review of existing LPPKN home-grown parenting modules (*Belaian Kasih and Mutiara Kasih*) was done to check on similarities, contents, cultural appropriateness and mode of delivery.

The program, which uses a metaphor of building a house of support for parents and their children, is based on social learning theory and covers the following themes:

Figure 1: House of Support



The program was delivered by two trained facilitators for each group over five successive weeks using a participatory active learning approach that included a mixture of group discussions, illustrated comics demonstrating parenting skills, role-plays, and assigned home activities. The weekly sessions allowed parenting skills to be reinforced over time.



Study design

The study used mixed methods, including quantitative pre-post surveys, qualitative interviews and focus groups. The sample included 74 female caregivers and 26 children ages 10-17 recruited from two communities near Kuala Lumpur.

Research findings

Based on the pre-post surveys, parents reported:

- 32% decreased overall abuse
- 71% reduced physical abuse
- 19% reduced emotional abuse

They also reported a reduction in endorsement of corporal punishment, reduced overall child behavior problems, and reduced sense of parenting inefficacy.

Lessons learned

Impact: A universal program delivered by government staff on a community level may effectively reduce some forms of violence against children in Malaysia. Caregivers reported better mental health, particularly stress and reactivity, leading to improved positive parent-child relationships.

Scalability: The program was designed and implemented within an existing community delivery system, and therefore can be adapted and delivered at scale. Furthermore, results indicating the program's benefit extended beyond the parent's target child to other children and other parents not involved in the program suggest that the parenting skills may be applicable to a wider range of child ages and parent groups.



Recommendations

- A universal program delivered by government staff on a community level may be effective at reducing some forms of violence against children in Malaysia, expanding on evidence from previous research. Adaptations for digital and hybrid delivery may further increase the program’s scalability.
- The program can also function as a source of support for parents to learn more about positive parenting, thus improving parental behavior and child outcomes.
- The program could be improved in several areas to increase its effectiveness:
 - Additional training and support are required to help facilitators feel comfortable engaging parents in sensitive topics, such as sexual reproductive health. Participants suggested they may benefit from additional content on more emerging issues, including managing gadget use and online behavior.
 - A larger sample size and more targeted age ranges of children at a higher risk of maltreatment may be more beneficial for future studies in measuring parenting intervention effects.
 - The program may benefit from a disabilities review to ensure its content is more inclusive for parents with children living with a disability.
 - The program needs to be integrated within existing key performance indicators to be sustainable both in terms of facilitator capacity and long-term scalability.

“It is like this ... my children say that before I always scold them ... but now it is different ... there are less anger and scolding. Before I was like a Tarzan. But now ... when I feel angry, I take a pause. And the children said, Mum, your voice is not like a Tarzan anymore. There are changes like that. Whenever I feel angry, I took a pause. Even though the positive changes are not 100%, but there are some effects.

- 32 years old, infant group.

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Implementers: Malaysian National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN)
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