

'Loving lion' parents may pass on their stress IPS study identifies parents who want everything for their primary school kids

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There is a new kind of parent in Singapore - the "loving lion".

The term, coined by researchers at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), is an echo of the well-known "tiger mum" - a mother who is hyper-focused on her children's achievement and performance.

"Loving lions" want everything for their children, said IPS senior research fellow Mathew Mathews yesterday. He was sharing the findings from a study he led on parents' attitudes towards primary schools.

"They know academic grades are no longer enough, that their children need other soft skills and competencies," said Dr Mathews at a forum on parents and schooling. It was organised by IPS and held at Orchard Hotel. "They want to provide a happy environment, but also want good results."

All these desires cause these parents to be highly stressed, and they then pass on this stress to their children, Dr Mathews said.

He added that he used the word "loving" because the parents care for the well-being of their children.

Some 30 per cent of respondents in the study that IPS conducted last year belonged to this category.

The survey polled 1,500 Singaporean and permanent resident parents. Its main findings were released in July this year.

Overall, the study found that a majority of parents were satisfied with their children's primary schools.

The study also grouped parents into two other categories - 34 per cent of them were "new school" and 29 per cent were "old school".

New-school parents tend to be more hands-off, and do not worry so much about academic results or achievement, said Dr Mathews.

Their concern is more about helping their children pursue their passions and build character.

Old-school parents, on the other hand, just want good grades, Dr Mathews added.

Parents in the "loving lions" group were the most involved in their children's lives. For instance, nearly 85 per cent of them said it was important for parents to ensure their children had all the

resources to excel, in contrast to 37.5 per cent of new-school parents and 75 per cent of old-school ones.

Some 86 per cent of "loving lions" also said they needed to keep in touch with what the school and teachers were doing for their children, compared with 39 per cent of new-school parents and 77.6 per cent of old-school ones.

The IPS study found that despite their differences, almost all parents - 94 per cent - want to provide a happy environment for their children rather than focus solely on good grades. "However, how this is implemented may differ substantially," said Dr Mathews.

Parents said they are increasingly seeing the need for their children to have good character so that they make sound decisions.

Madam Janice Ong, 48, who has an 18-year-old daughter and a 15-year-old son, said values are more important to her than good grades. "Having an academic foundation is important, but beyond that, I have to understand my children's abilities," said the housewife. "I always tell them to put in their best efforts and not focus on the outcome."

She added: "When they are responsible, everything falls into place. They know their duties as students.

"More importantly, our children must be mentally healthy. I let them pursue their passions and interests, not so much getting As, so that they'll be happier."